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WILSON'S
TALES OF THE BORDERS
AND OF SCOTLAND:

Historical, Traditionary, and Imaginative.

WITH A GLOSSARY.

Revised by
ALEXANDER LEIGHTON,
ONE OF THE ORIGINAL EDITORS AND CONTRIBUTORS.

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WILSON'S TALES OF THE BORDERS, AND OF SCOTLAND.

THE BURGHER'S TALES.

THE HOUSE IN BELL'S WYND.

SOME reference has been made by Mr. Chambers, in his *Traditions of Edinburgh*, to a story which looks very like fiction, but the foundation of which, I dare to say, is the following, derived at most third-hand, from George Gourlay, a blacksmith, whose shop was in the Lucken-booths, his dwelling-house in Bell's Wynd, and who was himself an actor in the drama.

It is not saying much for the topography of an Edinburgh wynd, to tell that it contained a flat such as that occupied by this blacksmith; but he who would describe one of these peculiar features of the Old Town, would be qualified to come after him who gave a graphic account of the Dædalian Labyrinth, or pictured Menander. Such a wynd has been likened to the vestibule to a certain place, more hot than cozy—at another time, to two long tiers of catacombs with living mummies piled row over row; but, resigning such extravagances, we may be within the bounds of moderation, and not beyond the attributes of fair similitude, when we say that one of these wynds is like a perpendicular town where the long, narrow, dark streets, in

place of extending themselves, as they ought, on the earth's surface, proceed upwards to the sky. And which sky is scarcely visible—not that, if the perpendicular line were maintained, the empyrean would be so very much obscured, but that the inhabitants, in proportion as they rise away from mother earth and society, make amends by jutting out their dwellings in the form of Dutch gables, so as to be able to converse with their neighbours opposite on the affairs of the world below—that world above, to which they are so much nearer, being despised, on the principle of familiarity producing contempt. Then the sky-line would so much delight a Gothic architect, composed as it is of a long multiplicity on either side of pointed gables, lum-tops venting reek and smoke, dried women's heads venting something of the same kind. Next, the dark boles of openings to these perpendicular passages—so like entries to coal cellars,—yet where myriads of human beings pass and repass up to and down from these skyward streets, which have no name; being the only streets in the wide world without a nomenclature.

We picture the said George Gourlay and his wife, of an evening, at the time of the history of Bell's Wynd, and other such wynds, when a change was taking place among the masses there. The New Town was beginning to hold out its aristocratic attractions to the grandees and wealthy merchants, who had chosen to live so long in so pent-up a place. Ay, many had left years before, or were leaving their lairs to be occupied by those who never thought they would live in houses with armorial bearings over the door. So it was that flats were shut up, and little wonder was created by the circumstance of windows being closed by inside shutters for years. The explanation simply was, that the good old family

would come back to its old *lares*, or that no tenant could be got for the empty house. And then, of course, the furniture had flitted to the palaces beyond the North Loch; and what interest could there be in an empty house with the bare walls overhung by cobwebs, or gnawed into sinuosities by hungry rats, thus cruelly deserted by the cooks who ought to have fed them? Yet, in that same stair where Gourlay lived, there was a *door* with a history that could not be explained in that easy way.

"I say it puzzles me, guidwife Christian, and has done for years."

"And mair it should me, George. You have been here only nine years, but 'tis now twenty-one since my father was carried to the West Kirk; and a year afore that I heard him say the house was left o' a morning: nor sound nor sigh o' human being has been heard in't since that hour."

"And then the changes," said Geordie, "hae ta'en awa the auld folk whase gleg een would hae noticed it. As for Bailie or Dean o' Guild, nane o' them hae ever tirl'd the padlock."

"But the factor, auld Dallas o' Lady Stair's Close, dee'd shortly after my father, and that will partly account for't."

"It accounts for naething, guidwife Christian," rejoined he. "Whar's the laird? Men are sometimes forgetfu'; but what man, or woman either, ever forgets their property or heirlooms? Ye ken, love Christian," he continued, looking askance at her, half in seriousness and half in humour, "I am a blacksmith, and hae routh o' skeleton keys."

"And never ane o' them will touch that padlock while I'm in your keeping, Geordie. I took ye for an honest man."

An opposition or check which Gourlay did not altogether like; for, in secret truth, he had long contemplated an entry by these said skeleton keys, and, like all people who want a justification for some act they wish to perform, not altogether consistent with what is right, he had often in serious playfulness knocked his foot against the old worm-eaten, wood-rusted, dry-rotted door, as if he expected some confined ghost to shriek, like that unhappy spirit of the Buchan Caves, "Let me out, let me out!" whereupon Mr. Gourlay would have been, we doubt not, more humane than his old father-god, who would not let the pretty mother of love out of his iron net.

"Honest! there's twa-three kinds o' honesty, wife Christian. There's the cauld iron or steel kind, that will neither brak nor bend—the lukewarm, that is stiff—and the red hot, which canna be handled, but may be twisted by a bribe o' the hammer, or the cajoling o' the nippers. What kind would ye wish mine to be?"

"The cauld, that winna bend."

"And canna be fashioned to man's purposes, and made a picklock o'? Weel, weel, Christian, I'm content."

But George Gourlay was not content, neither then nor for several nights; nor even in that hour when, having watched guidwife Christian as she lay on the liver side, and heard the "snurr, snurr," of her deepest sleep, and listened to the corresponding knurr of the old timepiece as it beat hoarsely the key-stone hour between the night and the day, he slept noiselessly out of bed, and listened again to ascertain whether his stealthy movement had disturbed his wife. All safe—nor sound anywhere within the house, or even in the Wynd, where midnight orgies of the new-comers some-

times annoyed the remaining grandees not yet gone over the Loch; no, nor rap, rap, upwards from the spirits in the deserted house right below him, inviting him by the call of "Let me out." Most opportune silence, — not even broken by guidwife Christian's baudron watching with brain-lighted eyes at some hole in a meat-press. And dark too, not less than Cimmerian, save only for a small rule of moonlight, which, penetrating a circular hole in the shutter, played fitfully, as the clouds went over its source, on a point of the red curtains—sometimes disappearing altogether. By a little groping he got his hose; nor more would he venture to search for, but finding his way by touch of the finger, he reached the kitchen, where he lighted the end of a small dip. A sorry glimmer indeed; but it enabled him to lay his hands on a bunch of crooked instruments, which he lifted so stealthily that even a mouse would have continued nibbling forbidden cheese, and been not a whit alarmed. Then there was the more dangerous opening of the door leading to the tortuous stair—dangerous, for that quick ear ben the house, which knew the creak as well as she did the accents of Geordie Gourlay. Ah, *tutum silentii præmium!* has he not gone through all this, and reached the stair without a sneeze or sigh of mortal to disturb him!

So far was he fortunate; and slipshod in worsted of wife Christian's own working, who so little thought, as she pleased herself with the reflection of the softness for his feet, that she was to be cheated thereby, he slipped gently down the steps on this enterprise he had revolved in his mind for years and years of bygone time. Come to the identical old door. He had examined it often by candle-light before; and as for the rusty hasp and staple, and appended padlock, he knew

them well, with all their difficulties to even smith's hands of his horny manipulation. He laid down the glimmering candle and paused. What a formidable object of occlusion, that door by which no one had entered for twenty years! Geordie knew nothing of the old notion, that time fills secret and vacant recesses with terrified ghosts, frightened away from the haunts of men; yet he had strange misgivings, which, being the instinctive suggestions of a rude mind, had a better chance for being true to nature. Perhaps the cold night air, to which his shirt offered small impediment, helped his tremulousness; and that was not diminished when, on seizing the padlock, a scream from some drunken unfortunate in the Wynd struck on his ear and died away in the midnight silence. Nor was he free from the pangs of conscience, as he thought of the injunctions of guidwife Christian, and, more than these, the sanctions of morality and the laws; but then he was not a thief,—only an antiquary, searching into a dungeon of time-hallowed curiosities and relics. He laid his hard hand on the rusty padlock. He was accustomed to the screech of old bolts, but that now was as if it came from some of Vulcan's chains whereby he caught the old thieves. The keyhole was entirely filled up with red rust, which, like silence stuffing up the mouth, had kept the brain-works unimpaired; so it needed no long time till, through his cunning crooks, he heard the nick of the receding bolt. A tug brought up the hasp, and now all ought to have been clear; but it was otherwise. Time, with his warpings and accumulating glues, had been there too long—the door would not give way, even to a smith's right hand; but Geordie had a potency in his back, before which other unwilling impediments of the same kind, sometimes with a debtor's resistance at the

other side, had given way. That potency he applied; and the groan of the hinges responding fearfully to his ears, the vision was at length realized, of that door standing open for the passage of human beings.

So far committed, Geordie's courage came with a drawing up of his muscles; and muttering between his teeth, which risped like files, "I will face any one except the devil," he lifted the candle, the glimmer of which paled in the thick air of the opening. He waved it up and down before he entered; but it seemed as if the weak rays could not find their way in the dense atmosphere—enough, notwithstanding, to show him dimly a long lobby. He snorted as the accumulated must stimulated his nostrils; but there was more than must—the smell was that of an opened grave which had been covered with moil for a century. Yet his step was instinctively forward,—the small light flitting here and there like the fitful gleam of a magic lantern. Half groping with the left hand, as he held the candle with his right, he soon began to discover particulars. There were three doors, opening no doubt to rooms, on his left; and as the light—becoming accustomed, like men's eyes, to the dark—shone forwards towards the end, he saw another door, which was open. Desperate men—and Geordie was now wound up—aim at the farthest extremities. He made his way forward, laying down each stocking-clad foot as if in fear of being heard by the family below, whose hysterics at a tread above them at midnight, and in that house, would lead to inquiry and detection.

He came at length to the open door at the end of the lobby, and ventured in. He was presently in the middle of the kitchen, holding the candle up to see as far around him as he could. Geordie had never read of those scenes of enchantment where veritable men

and women, with warm blood in their veins, were, on being touched by a wand, changed into statues with the very smile on their faces which they wore at the moment of transmutation ; in which state they were to remain for a hundred years, till the wand was broken by a fairy, when they would all start into their old life. No matter if he had not, for here there was no change : the kitchen was as it had been left, twenty years before. The plate-rack, with the china set all along in regular order—no change there ; nor on the row of pewter jugs, one of which stood on the dresser, with a bottle alongside, and a screw with the cork still on its spiral end. No doubt some one had been drinking just on the eve of the cessation of the living economy. A square fir-table stood in the middle, supplied with plates ready to be carried to the dining-room ; and these plates were certainly not to have been supplied with imaginary meals, like those in the Eastern tale, for, as he held the candle down towards the grate, yet half filled with cinders, he saw the horizontal spit with the skeleton of a goose stuck on it. The motion of the spit had been suspended when the works ran out, and Baudron had feasted upon the flesh when it became cold. Nay, that cat, no doubt cherished, lay extended in anatomy before the fireplace. Nor could it be doubted that the roast had not been ready ; for the axe lay beside a piece of coal half splintered, for the necessities of the diminished fire. An industrious house too, wherein the birr of the wheel and the sneck of the reel had sounded : the pirn was half filled, and the wisp, from which the thread had been drawn, lay over the back of a chair, as it had been taken from the waist of the servant maid. But why should not the sluttish girl's bed have been made at a time of the day when a goose was roasting for dinner ? Nor did Geordie

try to answer, because the question was as far from his wondering mind, as the time when he stood there himself enchanted was from the period of that marvellous dereliction.

With eyes rounder, and wider, and considerably glegger, than when he left goodwife Christian snoring in her bed, so unconscious of what her husband was to see, he retraced his steps to the kitchen-door, and turning to the right, opened that next to him. It was the dining-room. He peered about as his wonder still grew. The long oak-table, in place of the modern sideboard, ran along the farther end, whereon were decanters and two silver cups; and not far from these a salver, with a shrivelled lump, hard as whinstone, and of the form of a loaf, with a knife lying alongside. The very cushion of the settee opposite to the fireplace had preserved upon it the indentation of a human head. But much less wonderful was the cloth-covered table, with salt-cellars and spice-boxes, and plates, with knives and forks appropriated to each; for had not Geordie seen the goose at the fire in the kitchen! The indispensable pictures, too, were all round on the dingy walls—every one a portrait—staring through dust; and a special one of a female, with voluminous silks, and a high flour-starched toupee, claimed the charmed eye of the blacksmith. Even in the vertigo of his wonder, he looked stedfastly at that beautiful face; nor did the painted eye look less stedfastly at him, as if, after twenty years, it was again charmed by the vision of a living man, to the withdrawing of that eye from the figure alongside of her, so clearly that of her husband. That they were master and mistress of this very house he would have concluded, if he had been calm enough to think; but he was, alas, still under the soufflé of the bellows of romantic wonder.

Where next, if he could take his eye off that beautiful countenance? There was a middle door leading into another room: he would persevere and still explore. Holding up the fast-diminishing candle, he looked in. There was a female figure there, standing in the dark, beside a bed. It was arrayed in a long gown, reaching to the feet, of pure white (as accords). It moved. Geordie could see it plainly: it was the only thing with living motion in all that still and dreary habitation. Hitherto his hair had kept wonderfully flat and sleek, but now it began to crisp, and swirm, and rise on end; while his legs shook, and the trembling had made the glimmer oscillate in every direction, whereby sometimes it turned away from the figure, again to illuminate it sparingly, and again to vibrate off. He could not, notwithstanding his terror, recede; nay, he tried ineffectually to fix the ray on the very thing that thrilled him through every nerve. Verily, he would even go forward, under the charm of his fear, which, like other morbid feelings, would feed on the object which produced it. First a step, and then a step. The glimmer was again off the mark; and when he got to the bed, the figure was gone—according to the old law.

But the bed was too certainly there, with its deep green curtains, which were drawn close, indicating midnight; and yet the goose at the fire, and the table laid! Nor could Geordie explain the physical anomaly, probably for the reason that he did not try. His candle was wasting away with those endless oscillations: the figure in white itself had run off with the half of the short stump; and he feared again to be left in the dark, where he would have a difficulty in finding his way out. Yet he felt he must draw these deep green curtains: the broad hand of Fate was upon his shoulders. He seized them hysterically, and pulled them aside far

enough to let in his head and the candle hand. A dark counterpane was covered quarter-inch thick with dust; but the odour was not now of must, it was a choking flesh and bone rot, scarcely bearable; even the light felt the heaviness, and almost died away in his tremulous fingers. There were clothes beneath the counterpane, and a long, narrow tumulus down the middle, as if a body were there, of half its usual size; but little more was visible, till the eye was turned to the top where the pillow lay, half up which the dark counterpane was drawn. There was a head on the pillow, partly covered by the coverlet, partly by a round-eared mutch—once, no doubt, white as snow, now brown as a Norway rat's back; yet Geordie would peer, and peer, till he saw an orbless socket of pure white bone, and a portion of two rows of white teeth clenched. An undoing of the clothes would have shown him—how much more? But his shaking was now a palsy of the brain, and he could not undo the suspected horror. He turned suddenly; and, as the green curtain fell with a flap, the dip lost its flame, and a black reek vied with that heavy cadaverousness. He was in the dark.

Such is the effect of degrees, that, as he groped and groped in a place where he had lost all landmarks, and the topography had become a confusion, he could have wished to see again the figure in white; which, from its own light, could surely, as a spirit, lead him out. His brain got into a swirl. If the white figure was the spirit of that thing which he had seen so partially in the bed, would it not return to flit about its own old tenement? yet not a trail of that white light cast a glance anywhere. Groping and groping, knocking his head against unknown things, he turned and turned, but could not find the lobby. He had got through

another door, but not that leading outwards. He must have got into another room ; for he felt and grasped things he had not heretofore seen. Then the noise he had made had such a dreary sound, falling on his strained, nerve-strung ear ! His hand shrunk at everything he touched, as if it had been a deaf adder, or deadly nag—above all, a shock of hair, from which he recoiled more than ever yet, till the devious turns round and round obliterated every recollection of what he had understood of localities. So far he must have retraced his steps ; for he had again the green curtain in his left hand without knowing it, and the right went slap upon that round-eared mutch, and the bone that was under the same. Recalled a little to his senses, he got at length to the kitchen, circumambulated and circummanipulated the table, and groped his way to the door in the end of the lobby, through which he had first entered. All safe now by the lines of the two walls, he hugged the outer door as if it had been a twenty years' absent friend, a father, or a wife.

Nor did he take time to relock the padlock. He had, besides, lost his crooked instruments. Ah ! how sweet to get into a warm bed safe and sound, after having fancied that from such a white figure hovering round dry bones he had heard—for Geordie had read plays—

“ I am that body's spirit,
Doomed for a certain time to walk the night ;
And for the day confined, to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away.”

How delightful to Geordie was that snore of wife Christian, as she still lay on the liver side, perhaps dreaming of seraphim !

The adventure of that midnight hour dated the be-

ginning of a change on George Gourlay. One might have said of him, with the older playwright who never pictured a ghost, *quod scis nescis* ; for the never a word scarcely would he speak to man or beast, nay, not even to a woman, who has a power of breaking the charm of that silence in others of which their sex are themselves incapable—even, we say, wife Christian. There are many Trophonian caves in the world about us, only known to ourselves, out of which, when we come, we are mute, because we have seen something different from the objects of the sunlight ; yea, if, as the Indians say, the animals are the dumb of earth, these are the dumb of heaven. Certain at least it is, that while Geordie did not hesitate before that night to use his voice in asking an extravagant price for an old lock, or even damning him who below made more noise than nails, he never now used that tongue in such dishonesties and irreverences. But, what was even more strange, wife Christian did not seem to have any inclination to break his silent mood ; nay, if he was moody, so was she. Then her eyelight was so changed to him, that he could not thereby, as formerly, read her thoughts. Perhaps she took all this on from imitation ; but she was not one of the imitative children of genius—rather a hard-grained Cameronian, to whom others' thoughts are only as a snare ; yet, might she not have had suspicions of her husband's silence ? All facts were against such a supposition, except one : that, on the following morning, she observed dryly, that the dip she had left in the kitchen had burnt away of its own special accord. Vain thoughts all. Geordie was simply “ born again ; ” and old women do not speak to infants, until, at least, they can hear.

Nor did this mood promise amendment even up to that night, when a rap having come to the door,

Geordie started, while guidwife Christian went undismayed to open the same; for, moody as she was, she was not affected by evening raps as he was, and had been since that eventful midnight. But if the sturdy blacksmith was afraid before she obeyed the call, he was greatly more so after she had opened the door, and when she led into the parlour an old man, with hair more than usually grey even for his years, with a staff in his hand, bearing up, as he came in, a tall, wasted body—so wasted, that he might have been supposed to have waited all this time for a leg of that goose which had been so very long at the fire. The grief of years had eaten up his face, and only left untouched the corrugations itself had made. Yet withal he was a gentleman; for his bow to Geordie was just that which the grandees of the Wynd made to each other as they passed and repassed. No sooner was he seated, holding his cane between his shrivelled legs, and his sharp grey eye fixed on the blacksmith, than the latter became as one enchanted for a second time, with all the horrors of the first catalepsy upon him, by the process of the double sense insisted for by Abercromby, but thus known in Bell's Wynd before his day. Yes, Geordie was entranced again, nor less guidwife Christian—both staring at the stranger, as if their minds had gone back through long bygone years to catch the features of a prototype for comparison with that long, withered face, so yellow and grave-like; then Christian looked stealthily, and concealed her face.

“You are a blacksmith, Mr. Gourlay?”

“Yes, sir.”

“How long have you been here in Bell's Wynd?”

“Nine years, come Beltane Feast.”

“Not so much as the half of twenty,” said the stranger, more inwards than outwards.

"Twenty!" ejaculated Christian, as if she could not just help herself.

And Geordie searched her rigid face for a stray sympathy, repeating within the teeth that very same word—"Twenty."

"Then," continued the old man, "you cannot tell who occupied the flat below at that long period back?"

"No."

"And who occupies it now?"

Geordie was as dumb as the white figure, or as the head on the pillow with the rat-brown mutch; and this time Christian answered for him:

"It hasna been occupied for twenty years, sir; and it has been shut up a' that lang time."

"Twenty years!" ejaculated the old man, pondering deeply, and sighing heavily and painfully.

"Do any of you know Mr. Thomas Dallas, the Clerk to the Signet, who lived once in Lady Stair's Close?"

"Dead eighteen years since," replied the wife.

"Ah, I see," rejoined the stranger; "and so the house has been thus long closed!" Then musingly, "But then it will be empty—no furniture, nothing but bare walls."

"Naebody kens," replied George, still busy examining the face of the questioner, as if he could not get it to be steady alongside the image in his own mind.

"You can, of course, open a padlock?"

"Ou ay, when it's no owre auld, and the brass slide has been well kept on the key-hole." Then, as if recollecting himself, "I hinna tried an auld ane for years."

"One twenty years unopened?" rejoined the stranger.

Geordie was again dumb and rigid.

"Indeed, sir," replied Christian, who saw that her husband was under some strong feeling, "he can pick ony lock."

"The very man," said the mysterious visitor. "And

now, madam, will you allow me to take the liberty of requesting to be for a few moments the only one present in this room with your husband, as I have some business of a very secret nature to transact with him, which it would not be proper for a woman, even of your evident discretion and confidence, to be acquainted with?"

"I dinna want ye to gang," whispered George.

"And what for no?" muttered she. "Let evil-doers dree the shame o' their deeds. Didna ye say to me ye were an honest man, ay, even as could iron or steel, and what ought ye to hae to fear? And now, sir," turning round, "I will e'en tak me to the kitchen, that what ye want wi' George Gourlay you may do in secret, even as he has been secret wi' me."

Then guidwife Christian went out, casting, as she went, a look of something like triumph at her husband.

"And now, George Gourlay," said the stranger, "the secret thing I have to transact with you, and for which I have come three thousand miles, is to ask you to go with me this night and open the padlock of the door of that house below, which has not been opened for twenty years."

"I winna, I canna, I daurna, sir. Gang to the Dean o' Guild. There's a dead body in the green bed, and there's a spirit in a lang white gown that watches it."

The hand of the stranger shook, as he grasped spasmodically his staff; his teeth for a moment were clenched; and he plainly showed a resolution not to seem moved by that which as clearly did move him to the innermost parts of his being. Nor did it now escape Gourlay, as he sat and gazed at him, that he was the original of that picture in the dining-room, which hung by the side of the beautiful lady.

"Then you must have been in?"

Geordie was silent, meditating on some new light gradually breaking in upon him.

"You must have been in, and—and—know the secret?"

"I ken nae secret, except it be that the goose which has been at the fire for twenty years is no roasted yet."

"That goose at the fire even yet!" ejaculated the stranger.

"Ay, and the thread still on the pirn."

"Pirn!" responded he mechanically.

"Ay, and the bottle standing on the dresser along by the pewter mug."

"Mug!"

"Ay, and the half-cut loaf on the oaken table, with alongside o't the knife."

"Knife!"

"Ay, and to cap a', the green bed with the dark red counterpane, and in it still the corpse."

"Corpse!"

"So, so," continued the stranger, "I have been wandering the wide world for twenty years to escape from myself, as if a man could leave his shadow in the east when he has gone to the west, and all that time found the vanity of a forced forgetfulness where the touch of God's finger still burned in the heart. Ay, nor long prairies, nor savannahs where objects are cast behind and not seen, nor thick woods which exclude the sun, nor rocky caves by the sea-shore, where there is only heard the roaring of the waves, could untwine the dark soul from its recollections. But other things of earth and human workmanship rot and pass away, as if all were vanity, but man's spirit; and yet here it has been decreed by Heaven, and wrought by miracle, that things of flesh, and bone, and wood, and dried grass should be enchanted for duration, yea, kept in the very place, and

form, and lineaments they possessed in a terrible hour, the memory of which they must conserve for a purpose. Speak man: Have those sights and things taught you aught of a purpose? Why look ye at me as if you saw into my heart, and grin as if you were gifted with the right of revenge? What thoughts have you—what wishes? What do you premeditate?"

"Just nae mair than that you'll no get me to enter that house again."

The stranger's head was bent down in heavy sorrow; and, after being silent for a while, he rose, and bidding Gourlay good night, went away, saying he would get another locksmith. The strange manner of Christian was now made even more remarkable, as, taking her bonnet and cloak, she sallied forth, late as the hour was, proceeding up the Wynd, and muttering as she went, "The very man, the very man," she made direct for Blackfriars Wynd, where she stopt, and looked up to a small window on the right hand. There was light in it; and ascending a narrow stair she reached a door, which she quietly opened. A woman was there, busily spinning. The birr ceased as the door opened.

"Ann Hall," cried Christian, as she entered, "he is come, he is come! I kent his face the moment I saw it."

"Patience, patience, Christian," replied the woman, "what are you to do?"

"There maun be nae patience, when God says haste."

"Canny, canny. The wa's are thin and ears are gleg. I can hear a whisper frae the next room. Now, I'll spin and you'll speak."

And so she began to produce the dirl by turning the wheel and plying the thread.

"What although ye hae seen him? that maks nae difference. Your aith is still afore the Lord; and though we are forbidden to swear, when we hae sworn

we hae nae right to brak that aith, as if it were a silly wand, to be broken and cast awa' at the end o' our journey. And then ye maun keep in mind, if you brak your word, ye stretch his neck."

"I carena," replied Christian. "The Lord maun hae His ain for reward, and Satan maun hae his ain, too, for punishment. Sin' ever that eery night when in my night-shirt I followed George into the house, and saw what I saw, the Spirit o' the Lord has been busy in my heart; and my aith has been to me nae mair than a windlestrae in the east wind, to be blawn awa' where it listeth. Ye are, like mysel', o' the Auld Light, and ken what it is to hae the finger o' command laid upon ye."

"We maun obey; but we maun ken whether the finger is for the will o' the auld rebel o' pride, wha rebelled in heaven, or Him wha says to the murderer, Get ye among the rocks or caves o' secrecy, and I will search ye out, and rug ye into the licht."

"And what for should I no ken whase finger it is?" said wife Christian. "Have I no seen what I have seen? For what are a' thae things keepit, as man keeps the apple o' his e'e? Is na the rust and the worm, ay, and Time's teeth, aye eating, and gnawing, and tearing, so that everything passes awa' to make room for others, as if the hail world were a whirligig turning round like your ain wheel there for ever and ever?"

"Ay, the Lord's hand, na doubt. The deil doesna keep the instruments and signs o' his evil, but shuffles them awa' in nooks and corners to be out o' the een o' his victims."

"But hae I no laid my very hand on the fleshless head o' the bonny misguided creature? Wae tak the man wha brought sae muckle beauty to the earth to rot, and yet hae nae grave to cover it!"

"Weel mind I o' her," said Ann, as she still made the

wheel go round. "How she sailed up the Wynd wi' her load o' silks and satins, and the ribbons that waved in the wind, as if to say, Look here; saw ye ever the like among the daughters o' men?"

"It was left to testify, woman, naething else; but the glimmer o' Geordie's candle showed me a' the lave. Ay, the very goose I plucked, and drew, and singed, and put on the spi'—what for is it there, think ye, cummer, but to testify? and the pewter jug I drank out o' that forenoon, and my ain bed I hadna time to mak—what for but to testify?"

"And punish. But oh, woman, he had sair provocations. Wha was that goose for?"

"For her lover, nae doubt; for my master wasna expected hame for a week. And was I no guilty mysel', wha played into her hands, and was fause to him wha fed me?"

"Haud your peace, then, and say naething. The Lord will forgi'e you."

"Oh God, hae mercy on me, a sinner; and tak awa' frae me this transgression, that I may lift up my voice in the tabernacle without fear or trembling!"

The wheel turned with greater celerity and more noise, and wife Christian was on her knees, beating her bosom and crying for mercy.

"Say nae mair, woman," cried the spinner, "and do nae mair. Let the corpse lie in the green bed, and a' thing be in the wud-dream o' that dreary house; do nae mair."

"But the Lord drives me."

"Just sae; and he wham you would hang on the wuddy will stand up against ye, and swear ye were the cause o' the death o' his braw leddie, for that ye concealed her trothlessness, and winked at her wickedness."

"Haud your tongue, cummer," cried the Old Light

sinner; "haud your tongue, or you'll drive me mad. Is my heart no like aneugh to brak its strings, but ye maun tug at them? Is my brain no het aneugh, but ye maun set lowe to it, and burn it? And my conscience, ken ye na what it is to hae that terrible thing within ye, when it's waukened up like a fiend o' hell, chasing ye wi' a red-het brand, and nae escape, for the angel o' the Lord hauds ye agen? Ann Hall, my auldest friend, will ye do this thing for me?"

"What is it?"

"Gang to Mr B——, the fiscal, and tell him that the corpse is there, and that the man is here, and say naething o' me; do this, or I'll never haud up my hands again for grace and mercy."

Ann was silent, only driving the wheel, the sound of which in the silent house—dark enough, too, in the small light of the oil cruise over the fire-place—was all that was heard, save the occasional sobs of the unhappy victim of conscience.

"I canna, Christian; I canna, lass. I'll hang nae man for the death o' a light-o'-love limmer, and to save the conscience o' ane wha, if she didna see something wrang when it *was* wrang, ought to hae seen it."

"I repent and am sair in the spirit," replied Christian; "but if I had tauld him what I suspected was wrang between Spynie—and ye ken he was a lord, and titles east glamour over the een o' maidens—and my mistress, it would hae been a' the same. But wae's me!" she added, as she sighed from the depths of the heart, and wrung her hands, "I had a lichtness about me myself. A woman's no in her ain keeping at wild happy nineteen. The heart is aye jumping against the head. But oh, how changed when the Auld Licht shone ower me! And hae I no been a guid wife to Geordie Gourlay? Will you no help me, woman?"

"I hae said it," replied Mrs Hall, as the energy of her resolution passed into the moving power of the wheel, and the revolutions became quicker and quicker.

The Cameronian stood for a moment looking at her—the lips compressed, the brow knit, the hand firmly bound up, and striking it upon the wall.

"Ye're o' my faith," said she bitterly; "and may the Evil One help ye when ye're in need o' the Lord!"

And with these words she left her old friend, drawing the door after her with a clang, which shook the crazy tenement. In a moment she was in the street, now beginning to be deserted. The wooden-pillared lamps, so thinly distributed, and their small dreary spunk of life, showed only the darkness they were perhaps intended to illumine; and here and there was seen a gay-dressed sprig of aristocracy, with his gold-headed cane, cocked hat, and braided vest, strolling unsteadily home, after having drunk his couple of claret. Solitary city guardsmen were lounging about, as if waiting for the peace being broken, when an encounter occurred between some such ornamented braggadocio and a low Wynd blackguard—ready to use his quarter-staff against the silver-handled sword of the aristocrat; and here and there the high-pattened, short-gowned light-o'-love, regardless of the loud-screamed "gardy-loo," frolicked with "gold lace and wine," or swore the Edinburgh oaths at untrue and discarded lovers of their own degree. But guidwife Christian saw none of all these things; only one engrossing vision was in her mind, that of the sleeping scene of enchantment in the old flat, associated with the figure of the stranger;—one feeling only was paramount in her heart, the inspired awe of the conviction that these petrified relics of another time, so long back, were there waiting for her to touch them, that they should be disenchant-
ed,

and speak and tell their tale, and then rot and depart, according to the usual law of change, and corruption, and decay.

In this mood she got to the top of the Wynd, and was hurrying along the first or covered portion, overspread by the front lands, and therefore dark, when she encountered a man rolled up in a cloak. Even in the dim light coming from the street lamp on the main pavement, she recognised him in a moment. He was slouching down by the side of the wall, and did not seem to notice her. So Christian held back, until he had got farther on. She felt herself concentrated upon his movements, and observed that he hung about her own stair, standing in the middle of the close, with his eye fixed on the dark windows of the deserted flat. There was no meaning in his action. It seemed simply that his eye was bound to that house. So far Christian understood the ways of the world; but there are deeper mysteries there than she wotted of or dreamed just then. A man will examine a gangrene if it is hopeful; and will hope, and shrink, and be alarmed, when the hope fails only but a little; nay, he will dread the undoing of the bandages, lest the hope of the prior undoing should be changed by the new aspect into a conviction of aggravation; but there is a state of that ailment, as of moral ills, where all hope having vanished, despair comes to be reconciled to its own terrors, and the eye will peer into the hopeless thing, ay, and be charmed with it, and dally with it, as an irremediable condition, which is his own peculium, a part of his nature, so far changed. He then becomes a lover of pity, as before he was a seeker for hope; and, like a desperate bankrupt, will hawk the balance-sheet of his ills, to make up for the subtraction from his credit by the sympathy of the world. So did that

man look upon that house, a hopeless sore, after twenty years pain and agony, with these green spots, and the caustic-defying "proud flesh." Was not the fleshless corpse of his dead wife still there? She was a skeleton; but he could only fancy her as he had seen her twenty years before, a young and beautiful woman. Nor was he alarmed as Christian, weary of waiting but not unsteeled now for a recognition, stepped forward and confronted him.

"Mrs. Gourlay!" he said, as he peered into her hard face.

"Ay, guidwife Christian, as my husband says. Christian Gourlay that is—Christian Dempster that was."

"Dempster!" ejaculated he, as he staggered and sustained himself against the side of the close.

"Yes, sir—Patrick Guthrie that was when I was Dempster, and is—ay, and will be till you are born again, and baptized with fire."

"Patrick Guthrie!" he repeated. "Yes, the man, the very man. And here, too, is the evidence kept and preserved, perhaps more than once snatched from death, to be here at this hour to see me, and lay your hand on me, and be certain that I am the man, the very man. And," after a pause, "you have kept your sworn promise?"

"Till this day. Look up there, and see thae closed shutters; go in, and behold, and say whether or not."

"Too faithful!" groaned he.

"To an aith wrung out o' me by a money-bribe and terror."

"And to be repaid by a money-reward and penitence."

"The ane, sir, but never the other. Another day—another day," she repeated, "will try a'."

"What mean you, Christian?"

"Mean I? Why are you here?"

"Because I am weary wandering over the face of the earth, an exile and a criminal, for twenty long—oh long years!"

"And now want rest and peace! And how can ye get them but through the fire of the law, and the waters of the gospel? Where are you living?"

"Why should I conceal from you, Christian?" said he, thoughtfully. "No—at the White Horse in the Canongate, under the name of Douglas."

"*Her* name! Then look ye to it; for there will be human voices where none have been for twenty years, and cries o' wonder, and tears o' pity. Yes, yes, the long sleep is ended, for the charm is broken. Good night."

And hurrying away, she mounted the stair, leaving the man even more amazed than he was heart-broken and miserable. Nor will we be far wrong in supposing that Patrick Guthrie sought the White Horse probably not to sleep, but if to sleep, as probably to dream. As for guidwife Christian, she was soon on that side so propitious to her snoring; and as for her dreams, they were not more of seraphim, nor of Urim and Thummim, than they were on that night when she was the disembodied spirit of her who had lain so long in the bed with green curtains. Yet, no doubt, Geordie was just as certain that she slept as he was on that same night when he saw the said disembodied spirit; and as for himself, there could be little doubt that, sleeping or waking, his mind was occupied in tracing the marked resemblance of the stranger to the picture on the wall, which would lead him again to the beautiful lady, and which, again, would remind him of the bones below the red coverlet; and then there is as little doubt as there

is about all these wonderful things, that he would fancy himself beridden with a terrible nightmare. Oppressed and tortured by thoughts which he could not bring to bear on any probable event, he turned and turned ; but all his restlessness would produce no effect on guidwife Christian, who seemed as dead asleep as ever was he of the Cretan cave in the middle of the seventy years. Nor could he understand this : heretofore a slight cough, even slighter than that which brought the Doctor in the " Devil on Two Sticks," used to awaken the faithful wife ; and now nothing would awaken her. He dodged, he cried ; but she wouldn't help to take off the nightmare, which, with its old characteristic of tailor-folded legs and grinning aspect, sat upon his chest, as it heaved, but could not throw off the imp. But what was more extraordinary, this strange conduct of Christian was the continuation of—nay, a climax to—her inexplicable conduct since ever that night when he caught up in his mind, as in a prism, that midnight vision which he had seen, and the fiery coruscations of which still careered through his brain. Honest Geordie had no guile ; and if he had had any, the new birth he had undergone, with the consequent baptism, would have taken it clean away, so that there was no chance of a suspicion of the part which guidwife Christian had played on the said occasion. Yet, wonder as he might, if he had known all, he would have wondered more how any woman, even with the advantage of a " New Light," could have snored under the purpose she had revolved in her mind, and which she had so darkly revealed to her old master. Ah yes, that female member, of which so much has been said—even that it contains on the subtle point thereof a little nerve which anatomists cannot find in the corresponding organ in man—can swim lightly *tanquam suber*, and

yet never give an indication of the depths below. But Geordie became wild ;—was she dead outright ? Dead people do not snore, but the dying do in apoplexy. He took her by the shoulders, and shook her.

“ Christian, woman, will ye no speak, when I can get nae rest ? Wha was that man wha called here yestreen ? ”

No, she wouldn't.

“ And did I no see you look at him as ye never looked at man before ? ”

No avail.

“ And what took ye out so soon after he was awa' ? ”

No reply.

“ And what's mair ”—the murder was now out,—“ did ye no meet him secretly at the stair-foot, and stand and speak to him in strange words and strange signs ? ”

Not yet.

“ And what, in the name o' Heaven, and a' the ither powers up and down and round and round, was the aith that ye swore to him ? ”

Another pause.

“ And what money-bribe was it ye spak o' sae secretly and darkly ? ”

All in vain. At length the knurr of the clock, and the most solemn of all the hours, “ one,” sounded hoarsely. Wearied, exhausted, and sorely troubled, Geordie fell asleep, greatly aided thereto by the eternal oscillation of that little tongue at the back of the greater and mute one, the sound of which ceased when the blacksmith was fairly and certainly over, just as if its services had been no longer needed that night.

Surely the next of these eventful days was destined, either by the Furies or the good goddess, to be that day that “ would try a'.” Even these words Geordie had heard, if he had not caught up many other broken

sentences, which showed to his distracted mind that guidwife Christian was in some mysterious way mixed up with the events and things of the charmed house. The comparatively sleepless night induced a later than usual rising ; but with what wonder did Geordie Gourlay ascertain, that late as Christian had been out on the previous night, she was already again forth of the house, leaving him to the bachelor work of making his own breakfast ! Where she had gone he could not even venture to suppose ; but certain he was that her absence was in some way connected with that stranger with whom he had seen her in communication the night before. The business did not admit of his waiting ; so he took his morning meal of porridge and milk, and with thoughts anxious and deep, yet deeper in mere feeling than portrayal of outward coming events, he sallied forth for the Luckenbooths. On descending the stair, he found to his dire amazement the door of the portentous flat—that grave above ground of so many things that should have been either under the earth, in the sinless regions of mortality, or in the mendicant bag of Time, rolled away beyond the ken of mortal—open. Yes, that door, with the rusty padlock, and the creaking hinge, and the worm-eaten panels, was open. He shuddered : yet he looked ben into the old dark lobby, where he had groped and so nearly lost himself ; and what did he see ? His wife, guidwife Christian, standing in the middle thereof in her white short-gown, so like, to his imperfect vision, that spirit he had encountered in that house before ! There seemed to be others there also ; for he heard inside doors creaking, and by and by saw come out of the far-end door that very man—yea, the very man. The reflection of a light shone out upon him. To escape observation, he slipt to a side ; and when he peered in again, no one was to be seen. They had

passed together into some of the rooms, probably that bedroom where stood the bed with the green curtains. Resolved as he had been never to enter that doorway again, he would have rushed forward, had not a hand been laid on his shoulder.

"George Gourlay," said a voice behind him.

"Ay, nae doubt I'm weel kenned."

"You are in the meantime my prisoner," said an officer, with the indispensable blue coat, and the red collar, and the cocked hat.

"For what?" said Geordie.

"Ye'll ken that by and by," replied the officer; "the fiscal will tell ye. Awa' wi' me to the office."

"Humph! for picking a lock," said the blacksmith. "The deil put my left fingers between my hammer and the stiddy when I meddle again wi' rusty padlocks."

"There's naething dune on earth but what is seen," said the man, as with something like a smile on his left cheek, the other retaining its gravity, he held up his finger as if pointing to heaven.

"Ay, ay, there's an e'e there."

"And to break open a house," continued the officer, "is death on the wuddy up yonder at the 'Auld Heart.'"

"But wha, in God's name, is the witness against me?"

"Guidwife Christian," said the officer again, seriously enough at least for Geordie's belief of his sincerity.

"And the woman has turned against her husband! This is the warst blow ava. But, Lord, man, I stowe naething."

"Thieves are no generally at the trouble of picking locks, rummaging a house, and going away empty-handed, as if out o' a kirk. But come, you can tell the Lord Advocate's deputy a' that."

And George Gourlay was taken away, muttering to himself, as he went, "This explains a'. Nae wonder

she wadna speak to the man she intended to hang. Woman, woman, verily from the beginning hae ye been wo to man, and will be to the end."

Led up the High Street, yet in such a way as to avoid any suspicion that he was in the hands of an officer, George Gourlay was placed safely in the room of Mr. B——, the procurator-fiscal of that time, for reasons unknown to us, in the Old Tolbooth. The entry through the thick iron-knobbed door to the inside of this dark and dreary pile, which borrowed its light only through openings left by the irregularities of the high masses of St. Giles, and the parallel rows of overshadowing houses, flanked by the booths and the Crames, was enough to vanquish the heart of the strongest and the most innocent. Nor was it the darkness and the squalor alone that were so formidable. Thick air, loaded with the breath and exhalations from unhealthiness and disease itself, had made livid faces and bloodshot eyes; drunken, uproarious voices, and bacchanalian songs, oaths, denunciations, and peals of laughter, mixed with groans. Only awaiting that inscription seen by the Hermet shadow who led the Florentine. Up a stair—through the midst of these children of evil or victims of misfortune, the innocent rendered guilty by infection, the condemned to death made drearily jolly by despair, imitating the recklessness of mirth,—and now the unfortunate George Gourlay is before his examiner.

"Mr. Gourlay," said the officer.

"Sit down, sir," said Mr. B——, "and wait till the others come. We cannot want Mrs. Gourlay, though no doubt you can swear to the man. In the meantime, hold your peace, lest you commit yourself. Say nothing till you are asked. Most strange affair."

Thus at once doomed to silence, George sat and

listened to the mixed buzz of this misery become ludibund. Nor was his unhappiness thus limited: a fearful conviction seized him, that long before he was hanged he would take on the likeness of the wretches he had passed through;—he would become sleazy; his eyes would be red, fiery, or bleared with tears, dried up in the heat of his fevered blood; his cheeks would be pale-yellow or blue, his voice husky, and his nose red; he would sing, swear, dance—ay, dounce Geordie would sing even as they. Better be hanged at once than sent hence thus deteriorated,—an unpleasant customer in the other world. Nay, one half of them had greasy, furzy, red nightcaps; and the chance was therefore a half that he would be thrown off in one of these, to the eternal disgrace of the Gourlays of Gersholm, from whom he was descended.

A full hour passed, bringing no comfort on its heavy wings. At length another red-necked official entered, and introduced guidwife Christian herself, and—Patrick Guthrie.

When these parties entered, Geordie's eyes and mouth had relapsed into that condition they presented on that occasion when he saw the wraith by the bed with the green curtains.

"Mrs. Gourlay," said Mr. B——, "you are the wife of George Gourlay, blacksmith?"

"Ay, and have been for nine years, come the time, the day, and the hour."

"Please throw your mind back twenty years."

"It ower aften gaes back to that time o' its ain accord, sir."

"Well, tell us where you lived, and what you did about that time."

"I was servant to Mr. Patrick Guthrie,—this gentleman sitting at my right hand."

"Was Mr. Guthrie a married man?"

"Ay, sir, he was married to a young lady, whose maiden name was Henrietta Douglas, ane o' the Brigstons, as I hae heard."

"What kind of woman was she?"

"Bonny, sir, as ony that ever walked the High Street or the Canongate; and the mair wae, sir. Cheerfu', too, and light-hearted and merry as the lavrock when it rises in the morning; ay, and the mair wae!"

"Why do you add these words?" continued Mr. B——. "What do you mean?"

"Because thae things brought gay gallants about the house when master was awa' in Angus, whaur he had a property near Gaigie; but he was nane, I think, o' the four Guthries."

"Then you knew that they came without the knowledge and against the wishes of your master?"

"Ower weel, sir, for my peace these twenty years bygane."

"Then you think there was more than indiscretion in Mrs. Guthrie?"

"Muckle mair, I doubt."

"Do you recollect the names of any of these gay gallants?"

"There was Lord Spynie, a wild dare-the-deil; but sae merry, and jovial, and pleasant, that his very een were nets to catch women's hearts."

"Do you remember of anything happening when Lord Spynie was in the house in Bell's Wynd?"

"Ay; on the last day o' my service, yea, the last day o' my leddie's life. My maister had gane to Gaigie, as I thought; but I aye doubted if he had been farther than the White Horse. He wouldna return for a week, not he; and so my leddie thought, for the next day she ordered me to get a goose, and roast it on the

spit; and weel I kenned wha the goose was for. But I didna like the business, for I had my pirns to finish—no, gude forgie me, that I was against this deception o' my master. The goose was bought, and pluckit, and singed, and put to the fire. The dinner was to be at twa o'clock, and Lord Spynie was there by ane. In half an hour after, wha comes rushing in but my master? And the moment he saw Spynie, he drew his sword, and so did his lordship his. My mistress screamed, and ran between them; and oh! sir, the sword that was thrust at Spynie gaed clean through my mistress's fair body. She was dead. Then Lord Spynie lost a' his courage, and flew out o' the house; and just as he was passing through the door, my master thrust at him, and his bluidy sword snapt and was broken clean through. He came back and looked on my leddy, and kissed her, ay, and grat like a bairn; but oh! he was composed too. 'Christy,' said he, 'lay your mistress on the green bed.' And so I did, and streeked her, and drew the coverlet over her, and put a mutch upon her head. Oh how fair she was in death! 'Christy,' said master, 'come hither.' I obeyed. 'Get the Bible,' he said. I got it. 'Get on your knees,' he said. I knelt. 'Here,' said he, 'is twenty gowden guineas; and now swear upon the Laws and the Prophets, and the four Gospels, that you will never, by word, or look, or pen, reveal to man, or woman, or wean what has been done in this house this day.' I swore. 'Now go,' said he; 'for I am to lock up the house, and go far away, where no man can know me.' So I took my little trunk, and went away sobbing. Nor was he a moment after me. I saw him shut the shutters and lock the door, and walk quickly away. Nor was he ever heard of more till yesterday; and there he is."

"Is all this true, Mr. Guthrie?"

"All true as God's word."

"And all this happened twenty years ago?"

"Yes."

"Then by the law of Scotland you are a free man, even were this murder or homicide; for twenty years is the period of our prescription. You may all go."

Then they rose to depart.

"Mr. Guthrie," cried Mr. B——, "bury your wife. And, hark ye, the goose has been at the fire for twenty years, and must now, I think, be roasted."

THE PRODIGAL SON.

THE early sun was melting away the coronets of grey clouds on the brows of the mountains, and the lark, as if proud of its plumage, and surveying itself in an illuminated mirror, carolled over the bright water of Keswick, when two strangers met upon the side of the lofty Skiddaw. Each carried a small bag and a hammer, betokening that their common errand was to search for objects of geological interest. The one appeared about fifty, the other some twenty years younger. There is something in the solitude of the everlasting hills, which makes men who are strangers to each other despise the ceremonious introductions of the drawing-room. So it was with our geologists—their place of meeting, their common pursuit, produced an instantaneous familiarity. They spent the day, and dined on the mountain-side together. They shared the contents of their flasks with each other; and, ere they began to descend the hill, they felt, the one towards the other, as though they had been old friends. They had begun to take the road towards Keswick, when the elder said to the younger, "My meeting with you to-day recalls to my recollection a singular meeting which took place between a friend of mine and a stranger, about seven years ago, upon the same mountain. But, sir, I will relate to you the circumstances connected with it; and they might be called the History of the Prodigal Son."

He paused for a few moments, and proceeded:—About thirty years ago a Mr. Fenwick was possessed

of property in Bamboroughshire worth about three hundred per annum. He had married while young, and seven fair children cheered the hearth of a glad father and a happy mother. Many years of joy and of peace had flown over them, when Death visited their domestic circle, and passed his icy hand over the cheek of the first-born; and, for five successive years, as their children opened into manhood and womanhood, the unwelcome visitor entered their dwelling, till of their little flock there was but one, the youngest, left. And O, sir, in the leaving of that one, lay the cruelty of Death—to have taken him, too, would have been an act of mercy. His name was Edward; and the love, the fondness, and the care which his parents had borne for all their children, were concentrated on him. His father, whose soul was stricken with affliction, yielded to his every wish; and his poor mother

“Would not permit
The winds of heaven to visit his cheek too roughly.”

But you shall hear how cruelly he repaid their love—how murderously he returned their kindness. He was headstrong and wayward; and though the small still voice of affection was never wholly silent in his breast, it was stifled by the storm of his passions and propensities. His first manifestation of open viciousness was a delight in the brutal practice of cock-fighting; and he became a constant attender at every “*main*” that took place at Northumberland. He was a habitual “*bettor*,” and his losses were frequent; but hitherto his father, partly through fear, and partly from a too tender affection, had supplied him with money. A “*main*” was to take place in the neighbourhood of Morpeth, and he was present. Two noble birds were disfigured, the savage instruments of death were fixed

upon them, and they were pitted against each other. "A hundred to one on the Felton Grey!" shouted Fenwick. "Done! for guineas!" replied another. "Done! for guineas!—done!" repeated the prodigal—and the next moment the Felton Grey lay dead on the ground, pierced through the skull with the spur of the other. He rushed out of the cockpit—"I shall expect payment to-morrow, Fenwick," cried the other. The prodigal mounted his horse, and rode homeward with the fury of a madman. Kind as his father was, and had been, he feared to meet him or tell him the amount of his loss. His mother perceived his agony, and strove to soothe him.

"What is't that troubles thee, my bird?" inquired she. "Come, tell thy mother, darling."

With an oath he cursed the mention of birds, and threatened to destroy himself.

"O Edward, love! thou wilt kill thy poor mother. What can I do for thee?"

"Do for me!" he exclaimed, wildly tearing his hair as he spoke—"do for me, mother. Get me a hundred pounds, or my heart's blood shall flow at your feet."

"Child! child!" said she, "thou hast been at thy black trade of betting again. Thou wilt ruin thy father, Edward, and break thy mother's heart. But give me thy hand on't, dear, that thou'lt bet no more, and I'll get thy father to give thee the money."

"My father must not know," he exclaimed; "I will die rather."

"Love! love!" replied she; "but, without asking thy father, where could I get thee a hundred pounds?"

"You have some money, mother," added he; "and you have trinkets—jewellery!" he gasped, and hid his face as he spoke.

"Thou shalt have them!—thou shalt have them,

child!" said she, "and all the money thy mother has—only say thou wilt bet no more. Dost thou promise, Edward—oh, dost thou promise thy poor mother this?"

"Yes, yes!" he cried. And he burst into tears as he spoke.

He received the money, and the trinkets, which his mother had not worn for thirty years, and hurried from the house, and with them discharged a portion of his dishonourable debt.

He, however, did bet again; and I might tell you how he became a horse-racer also; but you shall hear that too. He was now about two-and-twenty, and for several years he had been acquainted with Eleanor Robinson—a fair being, made up of gentleness and love, if ever woman was. She was an orphan, and had a fortune at her own disposal of three thousand pounds. Her friends had often warned her against the dangerous habits of Edward Fenwick. But she had given him her young heart—to him she had plighted her first vow—and, though she beheld his follies, she trusted that time and affection would wean him from them; and, with a heart full of hope and love, she bestowed on him her hand and fortune. Poor Eleanor! her hopes were vain, her love unworthily bestowed. Marriage produced no change on the habits of the prodigal son and thoughtless husband. For weeks he was absent from his own house, betting and carousing with his companions of the turf; while one vice led the way to another, and, by almost imperceptible degrees, he unconsciously sunk into all the habits of a profligate.

It was about four years after his marriage, when, according to his custom, he took leave of his wife for a few days, to attend the meeting at Doncaster.

“Good-bye, Eleanor, dear,” he said gaily, as he rose to depart, and kissed her cheek; “I shall be back within five days.”

“Well, Edward,” said she, tenderly, “if you will go, you must; but think of me, and think of these our little ones.” And, with a tear in her eye, she desired a lovely boy and girl to kiss their father. “Now, think of us, Edward,” she added; “and do not bet, dearest, do not bet!”

“Nonsense, duck! nonsense!” said he; “did you ever see me lose?—do you suppose that Ned Fenwick is not ‘wide awake?’ I know my horse, and its rider too—Barrymore’s Highlander can distance everything. But, if it could not, I have it from a sure hand—the other horses are all ‘safe.’ Do you understand that—eh?”

“No, I do not understand it, Edward, nor do I wish to understand it,” added she; “but, dearest, as you love me—as you love our children—risk nothing.”

“Love you, little gipsy! you know I’d die for you,” said he—and, with all his sins, the prodigal spoke the truth. “Come, Nell, kiss me again, my dear—no long faces—don’t take a leaf out of my old mother’s book; you know the saying, ‘Never venture, never win—faint heart never won fair ladye!’ Good-bye, love—’by, Ned—good-bye, mother’s darling,” said he, addressing the children as he left the house.

He reached Doncaster; he had paid his guinea for admission to the betting-rooms; he had whispered with, and slipped a fee to all the shrivelled, skin-and-bone, half-melted little manikins, called jockeys, to ascertain the secrets of their horses. “All’s safe!” said the prodigal to himself, rejoicing in his heart. The great day of the festival—the important St. Leger—arrived. Hundreds were ready to back Highlander

against the field : amongst them was Edward Fenwick ; he would take any odds—he did take them—he staked his all. “ A thousand to five hundred on Highlander against the field,” he cried, as he stood near a betting-post. “ Done ! ” shouted a mustachioed peer of the realm, in a barouche by his side. “ Done ! ” cried Fenwick, “ for the double, if you like, my lord. ” “ Done ! ” added the peer ; “ and I’ll treble it if you dare ! ” “ Done ! ” rejoined the prodigal, in the confidence and excitement of the moment—“ Done ! my lord. ” The eventful hour arrived. There was not a false start. The horses took the ground beautifully. Highlander led the way at his ease ; and his rider, in a tartan jacket and mazarine cap, looked confident. Fenwick stood near the winning-post, grasping the rails with his hands ; he was still confident, but he could not chase the admonition of his wife from his mind. The horses were not to be seen. His very soul became like a solid and sharp-edged substance within his breast. Of the twenty horses that started, four again appeared in sight. “ The tartan yet ! the tartan yet ! ” shouted the crowd. Fenwick raised his eyes—he was blind with anxiety—he could not discern them ; still he heard the cry of “ The tartan ! the tartan ! ” and his heart sprang to his mouth. “ Well done, orange !—the orange will have it ! ” was the next cry. He again looked up, but he was more blind than before. “ Beautiful !—beautiful ! Go it, tartan ! Well done, orange ! ” shouted the spectators ; “ a noble race !—neck and neck ; six to five on the orange ! ” He became almost deaf as well as blind. “ Now for it !—now for it !—it won’t do, tartan !—hurrah !—hurrah !—orange has it ! ”

“ Liar ! ” exclaimed Fenwick, starting as if from a trance, and grasping the spectator who stood next him by the throat—“ I am not ruined ! ”—In a moment he

dropped his hands by his side, he leaned over the railing, and gazed vacantly on the ground. His flesh writhed, and his soul groaned in agony. "Eleanor!—my poor Eleanor!" cried the prodigal. The crowd hurried towards the winning-post—he was left alone. The peer with whom he had betted, came behind him; he touched him on the shoulder with his whip—"Well, my covey," said the nobleman, "you have lost it."

Fenwick gazed on him with a look of fury and despair, and repeated—"Lost it!—I am ruined—soul and body!—wife and children ruined!"

"Well, Mr. Fenwick," said the sporting peer, "I suppose, if that be the case, you won't come to Doncaster again in a hurry. But my settling day is to-morrow—you know I keep sharp accounts; and if you have not the '*ready*' at hand, I shall expect an equivalent—you understand me."

So saying, he rode off, leaving the prodigal to commit suicide if he chose. It is enough for me to tell you that, in his madness and his misery, and from the influence of what he called his sense of honour, he gave the winner a bill for the money—payable at sight. My feelings will not permit me to tell you how the poor infatuated madman more than once made attempts upon his own life; but the latent love of his wife and of his children prevailed over the rash thought, and, in a state bordering on insanity, he presented himself before the beings he had so deeply injured.

I might describe to you how poor Eleanor was sitting in their little parlour, with her boy upon a stool by her side, and her little girl on her knee, telling them fondly that their father would be home soon, and anon singing to them the simple nursery rhyme—

"Hush, my babe, baby bunting,
Your father's at the hunting," etc.;

when the door opened, and the guilty father entered, his hair clotted, his eyes rolling with the wildness of despair, and the cold sweat running down his pale cheeks.

"Eleanor! Eleanor!" he cried, as he flung himself upon a sofa.

She placed her little daughter on the floor—she flew towards him—"My Edward!—oh my Edward!" she cried—"what is it, love?—something troubles you."

"Curse me, Eleanor!" exclaimed the wretched prodigal, turning his face from her. "I have ruined you!—I have ruined my children!—I am lost for ever!"

"No, my husband!" exclaimed the best of wives; "your Eleanor will not curse you. Tell me the worst, and I will bear it—cheerfully bear it, for my Edward's sake."

"You will not—you cannot," cried he; "I have sinned against you as never man sinned against woman. Oh! if you would spit upon the very ground where I tread, I would feel it as an alleviation of my sufferings; but your sympathy, your affection, makes my very soul destroy itself! Eleanor!—Eleanor!—if you have mercy, hate me—tell me—show me that you do!"

"O Edward!" said she, imploringly, "was it thus when your Eleanor spurned every offer for your sake, when you pledged to her everlasting love? She has none but you, and can you speak thus? O husband! if you will forsake *me*, forsake not my poor children—tell me! only tell me the worst—and I will rejoice to endure it with my Edward!"

"Then," cried Fenwick, "if you will add to my misery by professing to love a wretch like me—know you are a beggar!—and I have made you one! Now, can you share beggary with me?"

She repeated the word "Beggary!"—she clasped her

hands together—for a few moments she stood in silent anguish—her bosom heaved—the tears gushed forth—she flung her arms around her husband's neck—"Yes!" she cried, "I can meet even beggary with my Edward!"

"O Heaven!" cried the prodigal, "would that the earth would swallow me! I cannot stand this!"

I will not dwell upon the endeavours of the fond, forgiving wife, to soothe and to comfort her unworthy husband; nor yet will I describe to you the anguish of the prodigal's father and of his mother, when they heard the extent of his folly and of his guilt. Already he had cost the old man much, and, with a heavy and sorrowful heart, he proceeded to his son's house to comfort his daughter-in-law. When he entered, she was endeavouring to cheer her husband with a tune upon the harpsichord—though, Heaven knows, there was no music in her breast, save that of love—enduring love!

"Well, Edward," said the old man, as he took a seat, "what is this that thou hast done now?"

The prodigal was silent.

"Edward," continued the grey-haired parent, "I have had deaths in my family—many deaths, and thou knowest it—but I never had to blush for a child but thee! I have felt sorrow, but thou hast added shame to sorrow—"

"O father!" cried Eleanor, imploringly, "do not upbraid my poor husband."

The old man wept—he pressed her hand, and, with a groan, said, "I am ashamed that thou shouldst call me father, sweetest; but if thou canst forgive him, I should. He is all that is left to me—all that the hand of death has spared me in this world! Yet, Eleanor, his conduct is a living death to me—it is worse than all that I have suffered. When affliction pressed heavily upon me, and, year after year, I followed

my dear children to the grave, my neighbours sympathized with me—they mingled their tears with mine ; but now, child—oh, now, I am ashamed to hold up my head amongst them ! O Edward, man ! if thou hast no regard for thy father or thy heart-broken mother, hast thou no affection for thy poor wife ?—canst thou bring her and thy helpless children to ruin ? But that, I may say, thou hast done already ! Son ! son ! if thou wilt murder thy parents, hast thou no mercy for thine own flesh and blood ?—wilt thou destroy thine own offspring ? O Edward ! if there be any sin that I will repent upon my deathbed, it will be that I have been a too indulgent father to thee—that I am the author of thy crimes !”

“No, father ! no !” cried the prodigal ; “my sins are my own ! I am their author, and my soul carries its own punishment ! Spurn me ! cast me off !—disown me for ever !—it is all I ask of you ! You despise me—hate me too, and I will be less miserable !”

“O Edward !” said the old man, “thou art a father, but little dost thou know a father’s heart ! Disown thee ! Cast thee off, sayest thou ! As soon could the graves of thy brothers give up their dead ! Never, Edward ! never ! O son, wouldst thou but reform thy ways—wouldst thou but become a husband worthy of our dear Eleanor ; and, after all the suffering thou hast brought upon her, and the shame thou hast brought upon thy family, I would part with my last shilling for thee, Edward, though I should go into the workhouse myself.”

You are affected, sir—I will not harrow up your feelings by further describing the interview between the father and his son. The misery of the prodigal was remorse, not penitence. It is sufficient for me to say, that the old man took a heavy mortgage on his pro-

perty, and Edward Fenwick commenced business as a wine and spirit merchant in Newcastle. But, sir, he did not attend upon business ; and I need not tell you that such being the case, business was too proud a customer to attend upon him. Neither did he forsake his old habits, and, within two years, he became involved—deeply involved. Already, to sustain his tottering credit, his father had been brought to the verge of ruin. During his residence in Bamboroughshire, he had become acquainted with many individuals carrying on a contraband trade with Holland. To amend his desperate fortunes, he recklessly embarked in it. In order to obtain a part in the ownership of a lugger, he *used his father's name* ! This was the crowning evil in the prodigal's drama. He made the voyage himself. They were pursued and overtaken when attempting to effect a landing near the Coquet. He escaped. But the papers of the vessel bespoke her as being chiefly the property of his father. Need I tell you that this was a finishing blow to the old man ?

Edward Fenwick had ruined his wife and family—he had brought ruin upon his father, and was himself a fugitive. He was pursued by the law ; he fled from them ; and he would have fled from their remembrance if he could. It was now, sir, that the wrath of Heaven was showered upon the head, and began to touch the heart of the prodigal. Like Cain, he was a fugitive and a vagabond on the face of the earth. For many months he wandered in a distant part of the country ; his body was emaciated and clothed with rags, and hunger preyed upon his very heart-strings. It is a vulgar thing, sir, to talk of hunger ; but they who have never felt it know not what it means. He was fainting by the wayside, his teeth were grating together, the tears were rolling down his cheeks. “The servants of

my father's house," he cried, "have bread enough and to spare, while I perish with hunger;" and continuing the language of the prodigal in the Scriptures, he said, "I will arise and go unto my father, and say, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight."

With a slow and tottering step, he arose to proceed on his journey to his father's house. A month had passed—for every day he made less progress—ere the home of his infancy appeared in sight. It was noon, and, when he saw it, he sat down in a little wood by a hill-side and wept, until it had become dusk; for he was ashamed of his rags. He drew near the house, but none came forth to welcome him. With a timid hand he rapped at the door, but none answered him. A stranger came from one of the outhouses and inquired, "What dost thou want, man?"

"Mr Fenwick," feebly answered the prodigal.

"Why, naebody lives there," said the other; "and auld Fenwick died in Morpeth jail mair than three months sin'!"

"Died in Morpeth jail!" groaned the miserable being, and fell against the door of the house that had been his father's.

"I tell ye, ye cannot get in there," continued the other.

"Sir," replied Edward, "pity me; and, oh, tell me is Mrs Fenwick here—or her daughter-in-law?"

"I know noughts about them," said the stranger. "I'm put in charge here by the trustees."

Want and misery kindled all their fires in the breast of the fugitive. He groaned, and, partly from exhaustion, partly from agony, sank upon the ground. The other lifted him to a shed, where cattle were wont to be fed. His lips were parched, his languid eyes rolled vacantly. "Water! give me water!" he muttered in a

feeble voice ; and a cup of water was brought to him. He gazed wistfully in the face of the person who stood over him—he would have asked for bread ; but, in the midst of his sufferings, pride was yet strong in his heart, and he could not. The stranger, however, was not wholly destitute of humanity.

“Poor wretch !” said he, “ye look very fatigued ; dow ye think ye cud eat a bit bread, if I were g’ien it to thee ?”

Tears gathered in the lustreless eyes of the prodigal ; but he could not speak. The stranger left him, and returning, placed a piece of coarse bread in his hand. He ate a morsel ; but his very soul was sick, and his heart loathed to receive the food for lack of which he was perishing.

Vain, sir, were the inquiries after his wife, his children, and his mother ; all that he could learn was, that they had kept their sorrow and their shame to themselves, and had left Northumberland together, but where, none knew. He also learned that it was understood amongst his acquaintances that he had put a period to his existence, and that this belief was entertained by his family. Months of wretchedness followed, and Fenwick, in despair, enlisted into a foot regiment, which, within twelve months, was ordered to embark for Egypt. At that period the British were anxious to hide the remembrance of their unsuccessful attack upon Cadiz, and resolved to wrench the ancient kingdom of the Pharaohs from the grasp of the proud armies of Napoleon. The Cabinet, therefore, on the surrender of Malta, having seconded the views of Sir Ralph Abercrombie, several transports were fitted out to join the squadron under Lord Keith. In one of those transports the penitent prodigal embarked. You are too young to remember it, sir ; but at that

period a love of country was more widely than ever becoming the ruling passion of every man in Britain ; and, with all his sins, his follies, and his miseries, such a feeling glowed in the breast of Edward Fenwick. He was weary of existence, and he longed to listen to the neighing of the war-horse, and the shout of its rider, and as they might rush on the invulnerable phalanx, and its breastwork of bayonets, to mingle in the rank of heroes ; and, rather than pine in inglorious grief, to sell his life for the welfare of his country ; or, like the gallant Graham, amidst the din of war, and the confusion of glory, to forget his sorrows. The regiment to which he belonged joined the main army off the Bay of Marmorice, and was the first that, with the gallant Moore at its head, on the memorable seventh of March, raised the shout of victory on the shores of Aboukir.

In the moment of victory, Fenwick fell wounded on the field, and his comrades, in their triumph, passed over him. He had some skill in surgery, and he was enabled to bind up his wound. He was fainting upon the burning sand, and he was creeping amongst the bodies of the slain, for a drop of moisture to cool his parched tongue, when he perceived a small bottle in the hands of a dead officer. It was half-filled with wine—he eagerly raised it to his lips—“Englishman!” cried a feeble voice, “for the love of Heaven! give me one drop—only one!—or I die!” He looked around—a French officer, apparently in the agonies of death, was vainly endeavouring to raise himself on his side, and stretching his hand towards him. “Why should I live?” cried the wretched prodigal; “take it, take it, and live, if you desire life!” He raised the wounded Frenchman’s head from the sand—he placed the bottle to his lips—he untied his sash, and bound up his wounds. The other pressed his hand in gratitude.

They were conveyed from the field together. Fenwick was unable to follow the army, and he was disabled from continuing in the service. The French officer recovered, and he was grateful for the poor service that had been rendered to him; and, previous to his being sent off with other prisoners, he gave a present of a thousand francs to the joyless being whom he called his deliverer.

I have told you that Fenwick had some skill in surgery; he had studied some years for the medical profession, but abandoned it for the turf and its vices. He proceeded to Alexandria, where he began to practise as a surgeon, and, amongst an ignorant people, gained reputation. Many years passed, and he had acquired, if not riches, at least an independency. Repentance also had penetrated his soul. He had inquired long and anxiously after his family. He had but few other relatives; and to all of them he had anxiously written, imploring them to acquaint him with the residence of the beings whom he had brought to ruin, but whom he still loved. Some returned no answer to his applications, and others only said that they knew nothing of his wife, or his mother, or of his children, nor whether they yet lived; all they knew was, that they had endeavoured to hide the shame he had brought upon them from the world. These words were daggers to his bruised spirit; but he knew he deserved them, and he prayed that Heaven would grant him the consolation and the mercy that were denied him on earth.

Somewhat more than seven years ago he returned to his native country, and he was wandering on the very mountain where, to-day, I met you, when he entered into conversation with a youth apparently about three or four and twenty years of age; and they

spent the day together as we have done. Fenwick was lodging in Keswick, and as, towards evening, they proceeded along the road together, they were overtaken by a storm. "You must accompany me home," said the young man, "until the storm be passed; my mother's house is at hand,"—and he conducted him to yonder lonely cottage, whose white walls you perceive peering through the trees by the water-side. It was dusk when the youth ushered him into a little parlour where two ladies sat; the one appeared about forty, the other threescore and ten. They welcomed the stranger graciously. He ascertained that they let out the rooms of their cottage to visitors to the lakes during the summer season. He expressed a wish to become their lodger, and made some observations on the beauty of the situation.

"Yes, sir," said the younger lady, "the situation is indeed beautiful; but I have seen it when the water, and the mountains around it, could impart no charm to its dwellers. Providence has, indeed, been kind to us, and our lodgings have seldom been empty; but, sir, when we entered it, it was a sad house indeed. My poor mother-in-law and myself had experienced many sorrows; yet my poor fatherless children—for I might call them fatherless"—and she wept as she spoke—"with their innocent prattle, soothed our affliction. But my little Eleanor, who was loved by every one, began to droop day by day. It was a winter night—the snow was on the ground—I heard my little darling give a deep sigh upon my bosom. I started up. I called to my poor mother. She brought a light to the bedside—and I found my sweet child dead upon my breast. It was a long and sad night, as we sat by the dead body of my Eleanor, with no one near us; and after she was buried, my poor Edward there, as he sat

by our side at night, would draw forward to his knee the stool on which his sister sat—while his grandmother would glance at him fondly, and push aside the stool with her foot, that I might not see it;—but I saw it all.”

The twilight had deepened in the little parlour, and its inmates could not perfectly distinguish the features of each other; but as the lady spoke, the soul of Edward Fenwick glowed within him—his heart throbbed—his breathing became thick—the sweat burst upon his brow. “Pardon me, lady!” he cried, in agony; “but, oh! tell me your name?”

“Fenwick, sir,” replied she.

“Eleanor! my injured Eleanor!” he exclaimed, flinging himself at her feet. “I am Edward, your guilty husband! Mother! can you forgive me? My son! my son! intercede for your guilty father!”

Ah, sir, there needed no intercession—their arms were around his neck—the prodigal was forgiven! “Behold,” continued the narrator, “yonder from the cottage comes the mother, the wife, and the son of whom I have spoken! I will introduce you to them—you shall witness the happiness and the penitence of the prodigal—you must stop with me to-night. Start not, sir—I am Edward Fenwick the Prodigal Son!”

THE LAWYER'S TALES.

THE WOMAN WITH THE WHITE MICE.

MANY have, doubtless, both heard and read of the case of murder in which Jeffrey performed his greatest feat of oratory and power over a jury, and in which, while engaged in his grand speech of more than six hours, he caught, from an open window, the aphony which threatened to close up his voice for ever afterwards. I have had occasion to notice the wants in reported cases tried before courts; and in reference to the one I have now mentioned, I have reason, from my inquiries, to know that the most curious details of the transaction are not only not to be found in the report, but not even suggested, if they do not, in some particulars, appear to be opposed to the public testimony. The agent of the panel sits behind the counsel, delivering to him sometimes very crude materials for the defence, and the counsel sifts that matter; sometimes taking a handful of the chaff to blind a juryman or a judge, but more often casting it away as either useless or dangerous. In that unused chaff there are often pickles not of the kind put into the sack, and again laid as an offering before the blind goddess, but of a different kind of grain—nor often less pleasant, or, if applied, less acceptable to justice.

In a certain month in the year 18—, a writer in Dundee, of the name of David M——, was busy in his office, in a dark street off the High Street—busy, no doubt, in discharging the functions of that office

represented by Æsop as occupied by a monkey, holding the scales between the litigating cats. He heard a horse stop at his office door, as if brought suddenly up by a jerk of the rein.

"There is haste here," he thought; "what is up?"

And presently the door opened, and there came, or rather rushed, in a man, of the appearance of a country farmer, greatly more excited than these dour men generally are—except, perhaps, in the midst of a plentiful harvest-home—splashed up with mud to the back of the neck, and breathing as hard as, no doubt, the horse was that carried him.

"What is it, Mr. S——?" inquired the writer, as he looked at his client.

"A dreadful business!" replied he; and he turned, went back to the door, shut it, and tested the hold of the lock; then laying down his hat and whip, and pulling off his big-coat, he drew a chair so near the writer, that the man of law, *brusque* and even jolly as he was, instinctively withdrew his, as if he feared an appeal for money.

"What is the business?" again asked the writer, as he saw the man in a spasmodic difficulty to begin.

"We are all ruined at D——!" he at length said; "Mrs. S—— is in your jail, hard by, on a charge of murder."

"Mrs. S——! of all the women in the world!" ejaculated the writer in unfeigned amazement: "murder of whom?"

"Of a servant at D——," replied Mr. S——; "one of our own women."

"And what could be the motive?"

"The young woman," continued S——, "had been observed to be pregnant, and the report was got up that my son was the party responsible and blameable.

Then the charge is, that my wife gave the girl poison, either to procure abortion, or to take away her life. The woman is dead and buried ; but, I believe, her body has been taken up out of the grave and examined, and poison found in the stomach."

"An ugly account," said the writer. "I mean not ugly as regards the evidence, of which, as yet, I have heard nothing. I could say beforehand that I don't believe the authorities will be able to bring home an act of this kind to so rational and respectable a woman, as I have known Mrs. S—— to be ; but if you wish me to get her off, you must allow me to look at the case as if she were guilty."

"Guilty !" echoed the man, with a shudder.

"Yes. Were I to go fumbling about in an affair of this kind, acting upon a notion—whatever I may think or feel—that Mrs. S——, though your wife, *could not* possibly do an act of that kind, I would neither hound up, as I ought, the investigations of the prosecutor, nor get up proper evidence—not to meet their proofs only, but to overturn them."

"I would have thought you would have been keener to get off an innocent person—a wife, and the mother of a family, too—than a guilty one," said S——.

"We cannot get you people to understand these things," replied the writer ; "but so it is, at least with me, and I rather think a good number of my brethren. We have a pride in getting off a guilty person ; whereas we have only a spice of satisfaction in saving an innocent one. Perhaps I have an object, for your own sake, in speaking thus frankly to you ; and I tell you at once, that if you intend to help me to get off your wife, you must, as soon as you can—even here, at this moment—renounce all blind confidence in her innocence."

"Terrible condition!" said the farmer.

"Not pleasant, but useful. How, in God's name, am I to know how to doctor, purge, or searify, or anoint a testimony against you, unless I know that it exists, and where to find it?"

"Very true," rejoined the farmer, trying to follow the clever "limb."

"Don't hesitate. I will have more pleasure, and not, maybe, much less hope, in hearing you detail all the grounds of your suspicion against your wife, than in listening to your nasaling and canting about her innocence. All this is for your good, my dear sir, take it as you will."

"I believe it," said the farmer, "and will try to act up to what you say; but I cannot, of my own knowledge, say much, as yet. These things are done privately, within the house, and a farmer is mostly out of doors."

"Well, away, get access to your wife, ferret everything out of her, as well for her as against her. If she bought poison, where she bought it, what rats were to be poisoned, how it was applied, how she communicated with the girl, and where, and all, and everything you can gather. Question your servants all they saw or heard; your son, what he has to say; ascertain who came about the house, how affected towards the girl, whether there were more lovers than your son, whether the girl was melancholy, or hopeful, and likely to do the thing or not; but, above all, keep it ever in view that your wife is in prison, and suspected, and let me know every item you can bring against her. Away, and lose no time, for I see it's a matter of neck and neck between her and the prosecutor, and, consequently, neck and noose, or neck and no noose, between her and the hangman."

Utterly confounded by this array of instructions, the poor farmer sat and looked blank. It was impossible he could remember all he had been requested to do; and the duty of finding out facts to criminate the wife who had lived with him so long in love and confidence, bore down upon him with a weight he could hardly sustain.

"I will do what I can," he said.

"You must do *more* than you can," said the writer; "but, again I say, let me know every, the smallest item you can discover against your wife."

And, thus charged, Mr. S—— mounted his horse, and rode home to a miserable house with a miserable heart.

Extraordinary as the case was, it was entrusted to the charge of an extraordinary man, well remembered yet throughout that county, and much beyond it. In personal respects he was strong, broad, and muscular, with a florid countenance never out of humour, and an eye that flashed in so many different directions, that it was impossible to arrest it for two moments at a time. All action, nothing resisted him; all impulse and sensibility, nothing escaped his observation; yet no one could say that any subject retained his mind for more time than would have sufficed another merely to glance at it. He could speak to a hundred men in a day upon a hundred topics, and sit down and run off twenty pages of a paper without an hour of previous meditation; break off at a pronoun, at a call to the further end of the town; drink as much in a few minutes' conversation with a client as would have taken another an hour to enjoy, and return and finish his paper in less time than another would take to think of it. Always, to appearance, off his guard, he was always master of his position, nor could any obstacle make him stand and

calculate its dimensions—it must be surmounted or broken, if his head or the laws should be broken with it; always pressing, he never seemed to be impressed, and the gain or loss of a case was equally indifferent to him. His passion was action, his desire money; but the money went as it came—made without effort and spent without reason. Yet no man hated him; most loved him; few admired him; and even those he might injure by his apparent recklessness could not resist the good nature by which he warded off every attack.

He saw at once, after he had dismissed S——, that he had got hold of a desperate case, and also that he behoved to have recourse to desperate means; but it seemed to take no grip of his mind for more than a few minutes, by the end of which he was full swing in some other matter of business, to be followed with the same rapidity by something else, and, probably, after that, pleasure till three in the morning, when he would be carried home to an elegant house in a certain species of carriage with one wheel. Nor had even that consummation any effect on to-morrow's avocations, for which he would be ready at the earliest hour; and in this case he *was* ready. He set about his inquiries, first proceeded to D—— to get a view of the premises—the room where the young woman lay, where the son slept, and the bedroom of the mother—and ascertain whether the premises permitted of intercourse with the servants unknown to the farmer and his wife. He next began his precognition of those connected with the house, and, on returning to town, procured access to Mrs. S——.

The jail of Dundee was at that time over the court-house, a miserable den of a few dark rooms, presenting the appearance of displenished garrets, with small grated windows and a few benches. Here the woman

sat revolving, no doubt, in her mind all the events of a life of comfort and respectability, and now under the risk of being brought to a termination by her body being suspended in the front of that building where she had seen before this terrible consummation of justice enacted with the familiar and dismal forms of the tragedy of the gallows. We write of these things as parrots gabble, we read of them as monkeys ogle the, to them, strange actions of human beings; but what is all that comes by the eye or the ear of the experiences of an exterior spirit to the workings of that spirit in its own interior world, where thought follows thought with endless ramifications, weaving and interweaving scenes of love and joy and pain, contrasting and mixing, dissolving and remixing—bright lights and dark shadows—all seen through the blue-tinged and distorting lens of present shame? We cannot realize these things, nor did the writer try. He had only the practical work to do—if possible, to get this woman's neck kept out of a kench; nor did it signify much to him how that was effected; but effected it would be, if the invention of one man could do it, and if that failed, and the woman was suspended, it would trouble him no more than would the loss of a small-debt case.

"Sorry to see you in this infernal place, Mrs. S——," he said, as he threw himself upon a bench. "I must get you out, that's certain; but I can promise you that certainty only upon the condition of making a clean breast—only to me, you know."

"I know only that I never poisoned the woman," replied she.

"Do you want to be hanged?" said he, with the reckless abruptness so peculiar a feature of his character, at the same time taking a rapid glance of her demeanour. He knew all about the firmness derived

from the confidence of innocence, of which a certain class of rhapsodists make so much in a heroic way, and yet he had always entertained the heterodoxical notion that guilt is a firmer and often more composed condition than innocence, inasmuch as his experience led him to know that the latter is shaky, anxious, and sensitive, and the former stern and imperturbable. Nor did his quick mind want reasons for showing that such ought, by natural laws, to be the case; for it is never to be lost sight of, that, in so far as regards murder, which requires for its perpetration a peculiar form of mind and a most unnatural condition of the feelings, the same hardness of nerve which enables a man or woman to do the deed, serves equally well the purpose of helping them to stand up against the shame, while the innocent person, in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand—the probable proportion of those who *cannot* kill—has not the fortitude to withstand the ignominy, simply because he wants the power to slay. So without in his heart prejudging the woman, he drew his conclusions, true or false, from the impassibility of her demeanour. Her answer was ready—

“How could they hang an innocent woman?”

“But they *do* hang hundreds, who say just what you say,” replied he. “What are you to make of that riddle? Come, did you ever buy any poison?—please leave out the rats.”

“No; neither for rats nor servants,” was the composed reply.

“And you never gave the woman a dose?”

“Yes; I have given her medicine more than once.”

“Oh, a capital thing to save life; but you know her life was not saved. She died and was buried, and has been taken up; and I suspect it was not your jalap that

was found in the body. But what interest had you in being so very kind to the woman who was to bring shame on your family by bearing a child to your son?"

"I never knew she was in that way; but though I had known it, I could not have taken away her life."

"Then, who gave her the poison?"

"I do not know."

"And cannot even suspect any one?"

"No."

"Good-bye!" he said, as he started up and hurried away; muttering to himself, as the jailer undid the bolts, "Always the same!—the women are always innocent; and yet we see them stretching ropes other than clothes' ropes every now and then."

Defeated, but as little discomfited, as we might gather from his pithy soliloquy, his next step was to double up, as he termed it, the authorities, who, he knew, would never have gone the length of apprehending the woman without having got hold of evidence sufficient to justify Sir William Rae, the Lord Advocate, a considerate and prudent man, that the charge lay heavy on the prisoner. He had no right of access, at this stage, to the names of the intended witnesses; but to a man of his activity it is no difficult matter to find these out, from the natural garrulity of the people, and a kind of self-importance in being a Crown testimony. Then to find them out was next to drawing them out; for it may be safely said for our writer that there was no man, from the time of John Wilkes, who could exercise a more winning persuasion. One by one he ferreted them out, wheedled, threatened, adjured, but found himself resisted in every attempt to break them down or to turn them to him. At every stage of his

inquiry he saw the ease for the prisoner assuming a dark aspect—as dark, he so termed it, as the face of a hanged culprit.

“The beagles have got a track. There are more foxes in the cover than one; and shall it be said I, David M——, cannot beat out another as stimulating to the nose?”

In a quarter of an hour after having made this observation to himself, he was posting on horseback to the farm of D——, where he arrived in as short a time as he generally took on his journeys.

“I am afraid to ask you for intelligence,” said the farmer, as he stood by the horse’s side, and addressed the writer, who kept his seat.

“Get me two and five-eighths of a glass of whisky in a jug of milk, and I’ll tell you then what I want. I have no time to dismount.”

The farmer complied.

“The ease looks ugly,” said the writer, as he handed back the jug. “These witnesses would hang a calendar saint of a hundred miracles. Are any tramps in the habit of coming about you?”

“Too many.”

“Do you know any of them?”

“Scarcely—not by name.”

“Any women?—never mind the men,” said the writer impatiently.

“Yes; there is one who used to come often; she sold small things.”

“Is that all you know of her? Has she no mark, man? Is her nose long or short? no squint, lame leg, or pock-pits?”

“She had usually a small cage, in which she kept a couple of white mice.”

“White mice!” ejaculated the writer; “never was a better mark.”

"You don't know her name?"

"No; nor do I think any of my present people do."

"When was she here last?"

"About a month ago."

"Anywhere near the time of the girl's death?"

"Ay, just about that time, or maybe a week before."

"And you can give me no trace of her?"

"None whatever, except that I think I saw her take to the east, in the way to Arbroath. But I do not see how she can be of any use."

"I don't want you to see that she can be of any use," said the writer, laughing; "but I want you to hear whereabout she is."

"I will try what I can," said the farmer.

"And let me know by some messenger who can ride as fast as I can." Then adding, "Gilderoy was saved by a *brown* mouse, which gnawed the string by which the key of the jail door of Forfar hung on a nail, whereby the key fell to the ground, and was pulled by him through an opening at the bottom. Heard you ever the story?"

"No."

"But it's true, nevertheless. What would you say if a *white* mouse, or two of them, should save the life of your wife?"

"I would say it was wonderful," replied the farmer, with eyes a-goggled by amazement.

"And so would I," answered Mr. M——, as he put the rowels into the side of his horse and began a hard trot, which he would not slacken till he was at the Cowgate port, and not even then, for he made his way generally through the streets of the town with equal rapidity, and always the safer that he was the "fresher."

On arriving at his office he sat down, and, without

apparently any premeditation, unless what he had indulged in during his trot, wrote off with his usual rapidity four letters to the following effect:—"Dear Sir,—As agent for Mrs. S——, who now lies in our jail on a charge of murder, I request you will endeavour to find some trace of a woman who goes through the country with a cage and two white mice. Grave suspicions attach to her, as the person who administered the poison, and I wish your energies to be employed in aiding me to search her out." The letters were directed to agents in Arbroath, Forfar, Kirriemuir, and Montrose, and immediately committed to a clerk to be taken to the post-office, with a good-natured laugh on the lips of the writer—and, within the teeth, the little monologue—"The wrinkled skin easily conceals a scar."

From some source or another, probably the true one may be guessed, an *uberrima fides* began to hang round a report that a new feature had spread over the face of Mrs. S——'s case; and that, in place of her being the guilty person, the culprit was a tramp, with white mice in a cage. Nor were the authorities long in being startled by the report; but where that woman was no one could tell, and a vague report was no foundation for authoritative action. But if it was not for a Lord Advocate to seek out or hunt after white mice, that was no reason why the prisoner's agent should not condescend to so very humble an office; and, accordingly, two days after the despatch of the letters I have mentioned, the same horse that carried the writer on the former occasion, and knew so well the prick of his rowels, was ready saddled at the door of the office. The head of the agent was instantly drawn out of some other deep well of legal truth, some score of directions given to clerks, and he was off on the road to Glamis,

but not before some flash had shown him what he was to do when he got there. The same rapid trot was commenced, and continued, to the great diminution of the sap of the animal, until the place he was destined for loomed before him. He now commenced inquiries upon inquiries. Every traveller was questioned, every door got a touch of his whip, until at length he got a trace, and he was again in full pursuit. I think it is Suidas who says that these pretty little animals, called white mice, are very amatory, and have a strong odour, but this must be only to their mates. I doubt if even the nostrils of a writer are equal to this perception, whatever sense they may possess in the case of pigeons with a pluckable covering. But, however this may be, it was soon observable that our pursuer had at least something in his eye. The spurs were active; and, by and by, he drew up at a small road-side change-house, into the kitchen of which he tumbled, without a premonitory question, and there, before him, sat the veritable mistress of these very white mice, spaeing the fortunes of some laughing girls, who saw the illuminated figures of their lovers in the future.*

"Can you read me *my* fortune?" he said, in his own peculiar way.

"Na; I ken ye owre weel," was the quick reply, as she turned a pair of keen, grey eyes on him.

"Well, you'll speak to me at any rate," he said. "I have something to say to you."

And, going into the adjoining parlour, he called for a half-mutelikin. He needed some himself, and he knew the tramp was not an abstainer.

"Tell the woman to come ben," he said, as the man placed the whisky on the table.

* One version of the story says that Mr. M—— picked up the tramp at Cammerton, in Fife; but I adhere to my authority.

"What can you want, Mr. M——, with that old, never-mend vagabond?"

"Perhaps an uncle has left her five hundred pounds," said the writer with a chuckle.

"Gude save us! the creature will go mad," said the man, as he went out, not knowing whether his guest was in humour or earnest.

But, whatever he said to the woman, there she was, presently, white mice and all, seated alongside of the writer, who could make a beggar or a baron at home with him, with equal ease, and in an equally short time.

"You're obliged to me, I think, if I can trust to a pretty long memory," he said, handing her a glass of the spirits.

"Ay; but it doesna need a lang memory to mind gi'en me this," she replied, not wishing any other reason for her obligation.

"And you've forgotten the pirl scrape?"

"The deil's in a lang memory; but I hinna," she replied, with more confidence, for by this time the whisky had disappeared in the accustomed bourne of departed spirits.

"Weel, it's a bad business that at your auld freend's at D——," said he, getting into his Scotch, for familiarity. "Hae ye heard?"

"Wha hasna heard? I kened the lassie brawly; but I didna like her—she was never gude to a puir eratur like me."

"But they say ye ken mair than ither folk?" said he.

"Maybe I do," replied the woman, getting proud of the impeachment. "Hae we nae lugs and een, ay, and stamaechs, like ither folk?"

"And could ye do naething to save this puir woman,

the wife o' a gude buirdly man, wi' an open hand to your kin, and the mither o' a family?"

"I care naething about her being the wife o' a man, or the mither o' a family; but I ken what I ken."

"And sometimes what ye dinna ken, when you tell the lasses o' their lovers ye never saw."

"The deil tak their louping hearts into his hand for silly gawkies; if they werena a' red-wood about lads, they wadna heed me a whistle. But though I might try to get Mrs. S——'s head out o' the loop, I wadna like to put my ain in."

"I'll tak gude care o' that," said the writer. "I got ye out o' a scrape before."

"Weel than—"

"And weel than," echoed he.

"And better than weel than; suppose I swore I did it mysel'—and maybe I did; that's no your business—they wadna hang a puir wretch like me for her ain words, wad they, when there's nae proof I did it but my ain tongue?"

"No likely," replied he; "and then a hunder gowden guineas as a present, no as a bribe—"

"I want nae bribes—I gie value for my fortunes. If it's wind, wind is the breath o' life; a present!"

"Would make your een jump," added he, finishing his sentence.

"Jump! ay, loup! Whar are they?"

"You'll get the half when you come into the town, and the other when Mrs. S—— is safe. You will ca' at my office on Wednesday; and, after that, I'll tak care o' you. In the meantime, ye maun sell your mice."

"Geordie Cameron offered me five shillings for them; I'll gie them to him."

"No," replied the writer; "no to a *man*. Ken ye

nae woman-tramp will tak them, and show them about as you do?"

"Ou ay; I'll gie them to Meg Davidson, wha's to be here the night. But whaurfor no Geordie?"

"Never ye mind that, I ken the difference; and if Meg doesna give you the five shillings, I will."

"Well, buy them yoursel'," said the woman.

"Done," said he; "there's five guineas for them, and you can gie them to Meg as a present. Now, are ye firm?"

"Firm!" she cried, as she elutched the money, and gave a shrill laugh, from a nerve that was never softened by pity or penitence. "I think nae mair on't, man—sir, I mean, for ye proved yoursel' a gentleman to me afore—than I do now in spacing twins to your wife at her next doun-lying."

A rap on the table, from the bottom of the pewter measure, brought in the landlord.

"Fill that again," said the writer.

And the man having re-entered with the pewter measure—

"You're to give this woman board and lodging for a day or two, and I will pay you before I start."

"That will be oot o' the five hundred frae her uncle," said the man, laughing. "She's my lady noo; but what will become o' the mice?"

"There's Meg Davidson passing the window c'en noo," said the woman.

"Send her in," said the writer to the change-house keeper.

The woman going under this name was immediately introduced by the man, with a kind of mock formality; for he could not get quit of the impression that his old customer had really succeeded to the five hundred pounds—a sum, in his estimation, sufficiently large to insure respect.

"Maggy," said the writer, "tak this chair, and here's a dram. What think ye?"

"I dinna ken."

"Ye're to get the twa white mice and the cage for naething, and this dram to boot."

Meg's face cleared up like a June sun come out in a burst.

"Na," she said; "ye're joking."

"But it's upon a condition," rejoined he.

"Weel, what is't—that I'm to feed them weel, and keep them clean?"

"You'll do that too," said he, laughing, "for they're valuable creatures, and bonny; but you're to say you've had them for a year."

"For twa, if you like," replied the woman; "a puir fusionless lee that, and no worth sending a body to the deil for."

"Here they are," said the tramp; "and you're to tak care o' them. They've been my staff for mony a day, and they're the only creatures on earth I care for and like; for they never said to me, 'Get out, ye wretch,' or banned me for a witch; but were aye sae happy wi' their pickles o' barley, and maybe a knot o' sugar, when I could get at a farmer's wife's bowl."

Even hags have pathetic moods. Meg was affected; and the writer, having appreciated the virtue, whispered in the ear of his *protégée*, "Seven o'clock on Wednesday night," and left them to the remainder of the whisky. At the door he settled with the man, and, mounting his horse, which he had ordered a bottle of strong ale for, in addition to his oats, he set off at his old trot.

"Now let the Crown blood-hounds catch Meg Davidson and her mice," he said, as he pushed on.

The writer was, no doubt, bent eagerly for home, but he seldom got to his intended destination, though

we have given one or two examples of an uninterrupted course, without undergoing several stoppages, either from the sudden calls of business, which lay in every direction, or the seductions of conviviality, equally ubiquitous ; and on this occasion he was hailed from the window of the inn by some ten-tumbler men of Forfar, whose plan for draining the loch, by making toddy of it, had not, to their discomfort, been realized, but who made due retaliation by very clean drainings elsewhere. The moment he heard the shout he understood the meaning thereof, because he knew the house, the locality, and the men ; and Meg Davidson and her mice were passed into the wallet-bag of time, till he should give these revellers their satisfaction in a boon companion who could see them under the table, and then mount his horse, with a power of retention of his seat unexampled in a county famous for revolutions of heads as well as of bodies. Dismounting from his horse, he got his dinner, a meal he had expected at Dundee ; and, in spite of the distance of fourteen miles which lay before him, he despatched tumbler after tumbler without being once tempted to the imprudence of letting out his extraordinary hunt, but rather with the prudence of sending, through his compotators, to the county town the fact that a woman who perambulated the country with white mice was really the murderer of the country girl. This statement he was able to make, even at that acme of his dithyrambics, when, as usual, he got upon the head of the table to make his speech of the evening. It was now eleven, and he had swallowed eight tumblers, yet he was comparatively steady when he mounted ; and, though during the fourteen miles he swung like a well-ballasted barque in a gale of wind, he made sufficient headway to be home by half-past twelve.

Next morning, as ready and able as usual for the work of the day, he was at his desk about eleven, and when engaged with one client, while others were waiting to be despatched in the way in which he alone could discharge clients, he was waited on by a gentleman connected with the Crown Office. Having been yielded a preference, the official took his seat.

"I understand you are employed for Mrs. S——?" he said. "We have thought it necessary, as disinterested protectors of the lives of the king's subjects, to apprehend this woman. I need not say that our precognitions are our guarantee; but I have heard a report which would seem to impugn our discretion, if it do not shame our judgment, insomuch that, if it be true, we have seized the wrong person. Do you know anything of this woman with the white mice, who takes upon herself the burden of a self-accusation? Of course it is for you to help us to her as the salvation of your client."

"Too evident that for a parade of candour," replied Mr. M——. "Her name is Margaret Davidson. Her white companions will identify her. Her residence is where you may chance to find her."

"Very vague, considering your interest," replied the other. "Where did you find her?"

"Ask me first, my dear sir, whether I have found her. Perhaps not. If it is my interest to search her out, it is not less your duty to catch her. A vagrant with white mice is a kenspeckle, and surely you can have no difficulty in tracing her. I need scarcely add, that when you do find her, you will substitute her for my client, and make amends for the disgrace you have brought upon an innocent woman and a respectable family."

"I won't say that," replied the other, shaking his

head. "The evidence against Mrs. S—— is too heavy to admit of our believing a vagrant, influenced by the desire of, perhaps, a paid martyrdom, or the excitement of a mania."

"Then, why ask me to help you to find her?"

"For our satisfaction as public officers."

"And to my detriment as a private agent."

"Not at all."

"Yes: if I choose to make her a witness for the defence, and leave the jury to judge of *paid* martyrdom, or her real madness. Paid martyrdom!—paid by whom?"

"Not necessarily by you."

"But you want me to help you to be able to prove the bribe out of her own mouth, don't you?"

"Of course we would examine her."

"Yes, and cook her; but you must catch her first. Really, my dear sir, a very useful recipe in cuisine; and, hark ye, you can put the mice in the pan also. But, really, I am not bound, and cannot in justice be expected to do more. I have given you her name; and when had a culprit so peculiar and striking a designation as being the proprietor of a peripatetic menagerie?"

"Ridiculous!"

"Yes, *ridiculus mus*! But are you not the labouring mountain yourself, and do you not wish me to become the midwife?"

"I perceive I can make nothing of you," at length said the gentleman. "You either don't want to save your client, or the means you trust to cannot stand the test."

"God bless my soul!" roared the writer; "must I tell you again that I have given you her name and occupation? Even a cat, with nose-instinct put awry

by the colour of the white race of victims, would smell her out."

Bowing the official to the door with these words, he was presently in some other ravelled web, which he disentangled with equal success and apparent ease ; but, following him in his great scheme, we find him in the afternoon posting again to the farm. He found the farmer in the same collapse of hope, sitting in the arm-chair so long pressed by his wife, with his chin upon his breast, and his eyes dim and dead. The evidence had got piece by piece to his ear, paralyzing more and more the tissues of his brain ; and hope had assumed the character of an impossibility in the moral world of God's government.

"You must cheer up," said the writer. "Come, some milk and whisky. Move about ; I have got good news for you, but cannot trust you."

The head of the man was raised up, and a slight beam was, as it were, struck from his eye by the jerk of a sudden impulse. His step, as he moved to gratify the agent, seemed to have acquired even a spring.

"Why are you here," he said, as he brought the indispensable jug, with something even more than the five-eighths of the spiritual element added to the two glasses, "if you cannot tell me the grounds of my hope ? I could not comprehend what you meant about the woman and the white mice."

"Nor do I want you to understand it ; it is enough if I do," replied Mr. M——, as he put the jug to his mouth ; "but this I want you to understand, in the first place, that I want an order for fifty pounds from you."

The farmer was too happy to write an order for any amount within the limits of his last farthing, and getting pen and ink, he wrote the cheque.

"And you couldn't tell me the name of the woman with the mice; but I can tell you," he continued. "It is Margaret Davidson; and, hark ye—come near me, man—if you are called upon by any one with the appearance of a sheriff's beagle, or whatever he may be like, for the name of that woman, say it is Margaret Davidson, and that they will find her between Lerwick and Berwick. Do you comprehend?"

"Perfectly."

"And, moreover, you are to tell every living soul within ear-shot, servants or strangers, that it was that very woman who gave the dose to the lass, and that the woman herself does not deny it."

"Gude Lord! but is all this true, Mr. M——?"

"Is it true your wife did it, then, you d——d idiot?" cried the writer, using thus one of his most familiar terms, but with perfect good-nature. "Don't you in your heart—or hope, at any rate—think the Lord Advocate a liar? and has his lordship a better right to lie than I or Meg Davidson? Isn't the world a great leavened lump of lies from the Cape of Good Hope to the Cape of Wrath? And you want your wife hanged, because the nose of truth is out of joint a bit! Ay, what though it were cut off altogether, if you get your wife's back without being coloured blue by the hangman? But, I tell you, it's not a lie: the woman with the white mice says it of her own accord."

"Wonderful! the woman with the white mice!"

"The woman with the white mice!" echoed the writer.

And, getting again upon his legs, he hurried out, throwing back his injunctions upon S—— to obey his instructions. In a few minutes more he was again upon the road, leaving the clatter of his horse's hoofs to mingle with the confused thoughts of his mystified

client. Arrived at the High Street, where, as used to be said of him, he could not be ten minutes without having seized some five or six persons by the breast of the coat, and put as many questions on various matters of business, just as the thought struck him on the instant, he pounced upon one, no other than the confidential clerk of the fiscal.

"I say, man," seizing and holding him in the usual way, "have you catched the woman yet?"

"What woman?" replied the clerk.

"The woman with the white mice."

"Oh," cried the young man, "we have no faith in that quarter—a mere get-up; but we're looking about for her, notwithstanding."

"Well, tell your master that Meg Davidson was last seen on the Muir of Rannoch, and that the Highlanders in that outlandish quarter, having never seen white mice before, are in a state of perfect amazement."

A bolt at some other person left the clerk probably in as great amazement as the Highlanders; but our man of the law did not stop to see the extent of it. All his avocations, however, did not prevent the coming round of that seven o'clock on Wednesday evening, which he had appointed as the hour of meeting with the woman on whom his hopes of saving his client almost altogether rested. He was at his desk at the hour, and the woman, no doubt eager for the phenomenon of the "loupin' ee," was as true as the time itself. The writer locked the door of his office, and drawing her as near him as possible, inquired first whether any knew she was in town.

"Deil ane," she replied; "naebody cares for me ony mair than I were an auld glandered spavin, ready for the knackers."

"And you've been remembering a' ye are to say?"

Now, the woman did not answer this question immediately. She had been, for some days, busy in the repository of her memory—a crazy box of shattered spunk-wood, through the crevices of which came the lurid lights sent from another box, called the imagination, and such was the close intimacy, or rather mixture, of the revelations of these two magic centres, that they could not be distinguished from one another; but the habit of fortune-telling had so quickened the light of the one, as to make it predominate over, and almost extinguish that of the other, so that she was at a loss to get a stray glimmer of the memory, to make her ready, on the instant, for the answer.

“Remembering! Ay,” she said, “there’s no muckle to remember. The lass was under the burden of shame, and couldna bear it: she wanted some doctor’s trash to tak that burden aff her, if it should carry her life along wi’ t. I got the stuff, and the woman dec’d.”

All which was carefully written down—but the writer had his own way of doing his work. He would have day and date, the place where the doctor’s trash was bought, the price thereof, the manner of administering the same, and many other particulars, every one of which was so carefully recorded, that the whole, no doubt, looked like a veritable precognition of facts, got from the said box called the memory, as if it had been that not one tint of light, from the conterminous chamber, had mixed with the pure spirit of truth.

“Now,” said he, “regaining his English, when his purpose was served, “you’ll stand firm to this, in the face of judge, jury, justice, and all her angels?”

“Never ye fear.”

“Then, you will go with me to a private lodging, where I wish you to remain, seen by as few as you can. You’re a widow; your name is Mrs. Anderson; your

husband was drowned in the Maelstrom. Get weeds, a veil, and look respectable."

"A' save the last, for that's impossible."

"Try; and, as you will need to pay for your board and lodgings, and your dress, here's the sum I promised ye; the other half when Mrs. S.—— is saved."

"A' right; and did I no say my ee would loup?— but 'ae gude turn deserves anither,' as the deil said to the loon o' Culloden, when he hauled him doun, screaming, to a place ye maybe ken o', and whaur I hae nae wish to be."

"Where is Meg Davidson?" he then asked.

"Oh ay!" she replied, "that puts me in mind o' a man wha met me on the road, and asked me if I was the woman wi' the twa white mice? I tauld him she was awa east to Montrose, and sae it is."

"Not a cheep of the sale," added he.

"Na, na, nor o' ony thing else, but just Mrs. Anderson, the widow, whase man was drowned in the Maelstream."

And, having thus finished, the writer led the woman to her place of safety, there to lie *in retentis* till the court-day.

That eventful day came round. In the meantime, the prosecution never got access to the real white mouse tramp, and whatever they got out of Meg Davidson, satisfied them that she knew nothing of the murder. Large sums were given to secure the services of Jeffrey, then in the full blaze of his power, and Cockburn, so useful in examinations. The Lord Advocate led his proof, which was no darker than our writer had ascertained it to be, when he found himself driven to his clever expedient. The proof for the defence began; and, after some other witnesses were examined, the name of the woman with the white mice

was called by the macer ; and here occurred a circumstance, at the time known to very few. Cockburn turned round to our country agent, who was sitting behind him, and said, in a whisper—

“M——, if the angel Gabriel were at this moment to come down and blow a trumpet, and tell me that what this woman is going to swear to is truth, I would not believe her.”

Nor is there any doubt to be entertained that the woman's testimony took the court and the audience by surprise. The judges looked at each other, and the jury were perplexed. There was only one thing that produced any solicitude in our writer. He feared the Lord Advocate would lay hands upon her, as either a murderer or a perjurer, the moment she left the witness-box. At that instant was he prepared. Quietly slipping out, he got hold of the woman, led her to the outer door, through a crowd, called to the door-keeper, who stood sentry, to open for the purpose of letting in a fresh witness of great importance to the accused ; and having succeeded, as he seldom failed, he got the woman outside. A cab was in readiness—no time lost—the woman was pushed in, followed by her guardian, and in a short time was safely disposed of. Meanwhile, the Crown authorities had been preparing their warrant, and the woman was only saved from their mercies by a very few minutes.

It is well known, as I have already mentioned, that Jeffrey's speech for Mrs. S—— was the greatest of all modern orations, yet it was delivered under peculiar circumstances. When he rose and began, he seemed languid and unwell. The wonted sparkle was not seen in his eye, the usually compressed lip was loose and flaccid, and his words, though all his beginnings were generally marked with a subdued tone, came with diffi-

culty. Cockburn looked at him inquiringly, anxious and troubled. There was something wrong, and those interested in the defence augured ominously. All of a sudden the little man stopped, fixed his eye on one of the walls of the court-room, and cried out, "Shut that window." Through that opening a cold wind had been blowing upon and chilling a body which, though firm and compact, was thin, wiry, and delicately toned to the refined requirements of the spirit that animated and moved it with a grace peculiarly his own. The chill, in consonance with well-known pathological laws, produced first depression, and then a feverish reaction, which latter was even morbidly favourable to the development of his powers. He began to revive; the blood, pulsing with more than natural activity, warmed still more at the call of his enthusiasm. He analyzed every part of the cause, tore up the characters of the prosecutor's witnesses, held up microscopic flaws, and passed them through the lens of his ingenious exaggeration, till they appeared serious in the eyes of the jury. Then how touching, if not noble, was the conduct of that strange witness for the defence—who, a wretched criminal herself, would yet, under a secret power, so far expiate her guilt by offering herself as a sacrifice for innocence! Beyond all was the pathos of his peroration, where he brought home the case to the jury, as loving husbands of loving wives, and tender fathers of beloved children. A woman sat there before them—a wife and a mother. She had undergone an ordeal not much less trying than death itself, and even then she was trembling under the agony of suspense, extended beyond mortal powers of endurance—to be terminated by the breath to their mouths, either for life and a restoration to a previously happy family, or for a death on a gallows, with all its ignominy.

That speech, which nearly cost Jeffrey his life, saved that of another. The jury found the libel not proven ; Mrs. S—— was free ; Jeffrey was made more famous ; but no one ever heard more of the woman with the white mice.

GLEANINGS OF THE COVENANT.

THE EARLY DAYS OF A FRIEND OF THE COVENANT.

I WAS born in the upper district and amidst the mountains of Dumfriesshire. My father, who died ere I had attained my second birthday, had seen better times; but, having engaged in mercantile speculations, had been overreached or unfortunate, or both, and during the latter years of his life had carried a gun, kept an amazing pointer bitch (of which my mother used to discourse largely), and had ultimately married in a fit of despondency. My mother, to whom he had long been affianced, was nearly connected with the Lairds of Clauchry, of which relationship she was vain; and in all her trials, of which she had no ordinary share, she still retained somewhat of the feelings, as well as the appearance of a gentlewoman. I remember, for example, a pair of high-heeled red Morocco shoes, overhung by the ample drapery of a quilted silk gown, in which habiliments she appeared on great occasions. Soon after my father's decease, my mother found it convenient and advisable to remove from the neighbourhood of the Clauchry to a cottage, or cottier as it was called, on her brother's farm, in the upper division of the parish of Closeburn.

Few situations could be better fitted for the purpose of a quiet and sequestered retreat. The scene is now as vividly before me as it was on that day when I last saw it, and felt that, in all probability, I viewed it for the last time. A snug kailyard, surrounded by a full-

grown bushy hedge of bourtree, saugh, and thorn, lay along the border of a small mountain stream, and hard by a thatched cottage, with a peat-stack at the one end and a small byre at the other. All this was nestled as it were in the bosom of mountains, which, to the north and the east in particular, presented a defence against all winds, and an outline of bold grandeur exceedingly impressive. The south and the west were more open; consequently the mid-day and afternoon sun reposed, with delightful and unobstructed radiance, on the green border of the stream, and the flowery foliage of the brae. And when the evening was calm, and the season suitable, the blue smoke winded upwards, and the birds sang delightfully amidst hazel, and oak, and birch, with a profusion of which the eastern bank was covered. It was here that I spent my early days; and it was in this scene of mountain solitude, with no immediate associate but my mother, and for a few years of my existence my grandmother, that my "feelings and fortunes were formed and shaped out."

To be brought up amidst mountain scenery, apart and afar from the busy or polluted haunts of man; to place one's little bare foot, with its first movement, on the greensward, the brown heath, or in the pure stream; to live in the retired glen, a perceptible part of all that lives and enjoys; to feel the bracing air of freedom in every breeze; to be possessed of elbow room from ridge to summit, from bank to brae,—this is, indeed, the most delightful of all infant schools, and, above all, prepares the young and infant mind for enlarged conception and resolute daring.

"To sit on rocks; to muse o'er flood and fell;
 To slowly trace the forest's shady scene,
 Where things that own not man's dominion dwell,
 And mortal foot hath ne'er or seldom been;

To climb the trackless mountain all unseen,
With the wild flock that never needs a fold ;
Alone o'er steeps and foaming falls to lean :
This is not solitude—'tis but to hold
Converse with Nature's God, and see his works unrolled."

Here, indeed, are the things that own not the dominion of man! The everlasting hills, in their outlines of rock and heath; the floods that leap in freedom, or rush in defiance from steep to steep, from gullet to pool, and from pool to plain; the very tempest that overpowers; and heaven, through which the fowls of air sail with supreme and unchallenged dominion,—all these inspire the young heart with independence and self-reliance. True it is that the child, and even the boy, reflects not at all on the advantages of his situation; and this is the very reason that his whole imagination and heart are under their influence. He that is ever arresting and analyzing the current of his thoughts, will seldom think correctly; and he who examines with a microscopic eye the sources of beauty and sublimity, will seldom feel the full force and sway of such impressions. Early and lasting friendships are the fruit of accident, rather than of calculation—of feeling, rather than of reflection; and the circumstances of scenery and habit, which modify the child, and give a bent, a bias, and a character to the after-life, pass all unestimated in regard to such tendency at the time. The bulrush is not less unconscious of the marsh which modifies its growth, or the wall-flower of the decay to which it clings, and by which alone its nature and growth would be most advantageously marked and perfected, than is the mountain child of that moral as well as physical development, which such peculiar circumstances are calculated to effect. If, through all the vicissitudes and trials of my past life, I have ever retained a spirit of independence, a spirit

which has not, as the sequel (which I may yet give) will evince, proved at all times advantageous to my worldly advancement—if such has been the case, I owe it, in a great measure, to the impression which the home of my youth was calculated to make.

My mother had originally received a better education than in those days was customary with individuals of her class; and, in addition to this advantage, she had long acted as housekeeper to an unmarried brother, the minister of a parish in Galloway. In this situation, she had access to a large and well-chosen library; and at leisure intervals had improved the opportunity thus presented. She was quite familiar with Young, and Pope, and Dryden, as well as with Tate's translation of Ovid's *Epistles*. These latter, in particular, she used to repeat to me during the winter evenings, with a tone of plaintiveness which I felt at the time, and the impression of which can never be obliterated. From these early associations and impressions I am enabled to deduce a taste for poetry, which, while it has served to beguile many an otherwise unsupportable sorrow, has largely contributed to the actual enjoyments of life. There are, indeed, moments of sadness and of joy, to which poetry can bring neither alleviation nor zest; but these, when compared with the more softening shadings, are but rare; and when the intensity of grief or of delight has yielded, or is in the act of yielding, to time or reflection, it is then, in the gloaming or the twilight, as darkness passes into light, or light into darkness, that the soothing and softening notes of poesy come over the soul like the blessed south.

In religion, or rather in politics—in as far, at least, as they are interwoven with and inseparable from the Presbyterian faith—my mother was a staunch Covenanter. Nor was it at all surprising that one whose

forefathers had suffered so severely in defence of the Covenant, and in opposition to oppression, should imbibe their sentiments. Her maternal grandfather had suffered at the Gallowlee; and her grandmother, who refused to give information to Clavers respecting the retreat of her husband, had her new-born babe plucked from her breast, dashed upon the floor, and the very bed, from which, to rescue her babe, she had sprung, pierced and perforated in a thousand places by the swords of the russians. Whilst this tragedy was enacting within doors, and in what, in these simple times, was denominated the *chaumer*, her eldest son, a boy of about twelve years of age, was arrested, and because he would not, or in all probability could not, disclose his father's retreat, he was blindfolded, tied to a tree, and taught to expect that every ball which he heard whizzing past his ear was aimed at his head. The boy was left bound; and, upon his being released by a menial, it was discovered that his reason had fled—and for ever! He died a few years afterwards, being known in the neighbourhood by the name of the Martyred Innocent! I have often looked at the bloody stone (for such stains are well known to be like those upon Lady Macbeth's hand, indelible,) where fell, after being perforated by a brace of bullets, Daniel M'Michael, a faithful witness to the truth, whose tomb, with its primitive and expressive inscription, is still to be seen in the churchyard of Durisdeer. Grierson of Lag made a conspicuous figure in the parish of Closeburn in particular; nor did my mother neglect to point out to me the ruined tower and the waste domain around it, which bespoke, according to her creed, the curse of God upon the seed of the persecutor. His elegy—somewhat lengthy and dull—I could once repeat. I can now only recall the striking lines where the Devil is in-

troduced as lamenting over the death of his faithful and unflinching ally :—

“What fatal news is this I hear ?—
On earth who shall my standard bear ?—
For Lag, who was my champion brave,
Is dead, and now laid in his grave.

“The want of him is a great grief—
He was my manager-in-chief,
Who sought my kingdom to improve ;
And to my laws he had great love,” &c.
* * * * *

And so on, through at least two hundred lines, composing a pamphlet, hawked about, in my younger days, in every huckster's basket, and sold in thousands to the peasantry of Dumfriesshire and Galloway, at the price of one penny. Whilst, however, the storm of evil passions raged with such fury in what was termed the western districts in particular, the poor, shelterless, and persecuted Covenanter was not altogether destitute of help or comfort. According to his own apprehension, at least, his Maker was on his side ; his prayers, offered up on the mountain and in the cave, were heard and answered ; and a watchful Providence often interfered, miraculously, both to punish his oppressors, and warn him against the approach of danger. In evidence of this, my mother was wont, amongst many others, to quote the following instances, respecting which she herself entertained no doubt whatever—instances which, having never before been committed to paper, have at least the recommendation of novelty in their favour.

One of the chief rendezvous of the Covenant was Auchincairn, in the eastern district of Closeburn. To this friendly, but, on that account, suspected roof, did the poor wanderer of the mist, the glen, and the moun-

tain repair, at dead of night, to obtain what was barely necessary for the support of nature. Grierson of Lag was not ignorant of the fact, and accordingly, by a sudden movement, was often found surrounding the steading with men and horses before daybreak; yet, prompt and well arranged as his measures were, they were never successful. The objects of his search uniformly escaped before the search was made. And this singular good fortune was owing, according to my authority, to the following circumstance. On the night previous to such an unwelcome visit, a little bird, of a peculiar feather and note, such as are not to be found in this country, came, and perching upon the topmost branch of the old ash tree in the corner of the garden, poured forth its notes of friendly intimation. To these the poor skulking friend of the Covenant listened, by these he was warned, lifted his eyes and his feet to the mountain, and was safe.

The curate of Closeburn was eminently active in distressing his flock. He was one of those Aberdeen divines whom the wisdom of the Glasgow council had placed in the three hundred pulpits vacated in consequence of a drunken and absurd decree. As his church was deserted, he had had recourse to compulsory measures to enforce attendance, and had actually dragged servants and children, in carts and hurdles, to hear his spiritual and edifying addresses; whilst, on the other hand, his spies and emissaries were busied in giving information against such masters and parents as fled from his grasp, or resisted it. He had even gone so far, under the countenance and sanction of the infamous Lauderdale, as to forbid Christian burial in every case where there was no attendance on his ministry. Such was the character, and such the conduct of the man against whom the prayers of a private meeting of

the friends of Presbytery were earnestly directed on the following occasion. The eldest son of the guidman of Auchincairn had paid the debt of nature, and behoved to be buried with his fathers in the churchyard of the parish. To this, from the well-known character both of curate and father, it was anticipated that resistance would be made. Against this resistance, however, measures were taken of a somewhat decided character. The body was to be borne to the churchyard by men in arms, whilst a part of the attendants were to remain at home, for the purpose of addressing their Maker in united prayer and supplication. Thus, doubly armed and prepared, the funeral advanced towards the church and manse. Meanwhile the prayer and supplication were warm, and almost expostulatory, that *His* arm might be stretched forth in behalf of His own covenanted servants. A poor idiot, who had not been judged a proper person to join in this service, was heard to approach, and, after listening with great seeming attention to the strain of the petitions which were made, he, at length, unable to constrain himself any longer, was heard to exclaim, "Haud at him, sirs, haud at him—he's just at the pit brow!" Surprising as it may appear, and incredulous as some may be, there is sufficient evidence to prove that, just about the time when this prediction was uttered, the curate of Closeburn, whilst endeavouring to head and hurry on a party of the military, suddenly dropped down and expired.

Is it, then, matter of surprise that with my mother's milk I imbibed a strong aversion to all manner of oppression, and that, in the broadest and best sense of the word, I became "a Whig?" To the mountain, then, and the flood, I owe my spirit of independence—that shelly-coat covering against which many arrows

have been directed ; to my mother, and her Cameronian and political bias, I owe my detestation of oppression—in other words, my political creed—together with my poetical leanings. But to my venerated grandmother, in particular, I am indebted for my early acquaintance with the whole history and economy of the spiritual kingdoms, divided as they are into bogle, ghost, and fairy-land.

I shall probably be regarded as an enthusiast whose feelings no future evidence can reclaim from early impressions, when I express my regret that the dreams of my infancy and boyhood have fled—those dreams of dark and bright agency, which shall probably never again return, to agitate and interest—those dreams which charmed me in the midst of a spiritual world, and taught me to consider mere matter as only the visible and tangible instrument through which spirit was constantly acting—those dreams which appear as the shadow and reflection of sacred intimation, and which serve to guard the young heart, in particular, from the cold and revolting tenets of materialism. From the malevolence of him who walks and who works in darkness—who goes about like a roaring lion (but, in our climate and country, more frequently like a bull-dog, or a nondescript bogle), seeking whom he may terrify—I was taught to fly into the protecting arms of the omnipotent Jehovah ; that no class of beings could break loose upon another without His high permission ; that the Evil One, under whatever disguise or shape he might appear, was still restrained and over-mastered by the Source of all good and of all safety ; whilst with the green-coated fairy, the laborious brownie, and the nocturnal hearth-bairn, I almost desired to live upon more intimate and friendly terms !

How poor, comparatively speaking, are the incidents,

how uninteresting is the machinery, of a modern fictitious narrative!—sudden and unlooked-for reappearances of those who were thought to be dead, discoveries of substituted births, with various chances and misnomers—“antres vast, and deserts wild!” One good, tall, stalking ghost, with its compressed lips and pointed fingers, with its glazed eye and measured step, is worth them all! Oh for a real “*white lady*” under the twilight of the year seventeen hundred and forty! When the elegant Greek or warlike Roman walked abroad or dined at home, he was surrounded by all the influences of an interesting and captivating mythology—by nymphs of the oak, of the mountain, and of the spring—by the Lares and Penates of his fireside and gateway—by the genius, the Ceres and the Bacchus of his banquet. When our forefathers contended for religious and civil liberty on the mountain—when they prayed for it in the glen, and in the silent darkness of the damp and cheerless cave—they were surrounded, not by material images, but by popular conceptions. The tempter was still in the wilderness, with his suggestions and his promises; and there, too, was the good angel, to warn and to comfort, to strengthen and to cheer. The very fowls of heaven bore on their wing and in their note a message of warning or a voice of comforting; and when the sound of psalms commingled with the swelling rush of the cascade, there were often heard, as it were, the harping of angels, the commingling of heavenly with earthly melody. All this was elevating and comforting precisely in proportion to the belief by which it was supported; and it may fairly be questioned whether such men as Peden and Cameron would have maintained the struggle with so much nerve and resolution if the sun of their faith had not been surrounded by a halo—if the noonday of the gospel

had not shaded away imperceptibly into the twilight of superstition. In fact, superstition, in its softer and milder modifications, seems to form a kind of barrier or fence around the "sacred territory;" and it seldom if ever fails to happen that, when the outworks are driven in, the citadel is in danger; when the good old woman has been completely disabused of her harmless fancies, she may then aspire to the faith and the religious comforts of the philosophy of Volney.

In confirmation of these observations, I may adduce the belief and life of my nearest relatives. To them, amidst all their superstitious impressions, religion, pure and undefiled, was still the main hold—the sheet anchor, stayed and steadied by which they were enabled to bear up amidst the turmoils and tempests of life. To an intimate acquaintance with, and a frequent reading of the sacred volume, was added, under our humble roof, family prayer both morning and evening—an exercise which was performed by mother and daughter alternately, and in a manner which, had I not actually thought them inspired, would have surprised me. Those who are unacquainted with the ancient Doric of our devotional and intelligent peasantry, and with that musical accentuation or chant of which it is not only susceptible, but upon which it is in a manner constructed, can have but a very imperfect notion of family prayer, performed in the manner I refer to. Many there are who smile at that familiarity of address and homeliness of expression which are generally made use of; but under that homely address there lie a sincerity and earnestness, a soothing, arousing, and penetrating eloquence, which neither in public nor in private prayer have ever been excelled. Again and again I have felt my breast swell and my eyes fill whilst the prayer of a parent was presented at a throne of grace in words

to the following purpose:—"Help him, good Lord!" (speaking in reference to myself), "oh help my puir, faitherless bairn in the day of frowardness and in the hour of folly—in the season of forgetfulness and of unforeseen danger—in trial and in difficulty—in life and in death. Good Lord, for his sainted father's sake (who is now, we trust, with Thee), for my puir sake, who am unworthy to ask the favour, and, far aboon and above a', for thine own well-beloved Son's sake, do *Thou* be pleased to keep, counsel, and support my puir helpless wean, when mine eyes shall be closed, and my lips shall be shut, and my hands shall have ceased to labour. Thou that didst visit Hagar and her child in the thirsty wilderness—Thou that didst bring thy servant Joseph from the pit and the miry clay—Thou that didst carry thy beloved people Israel through a barren desert to a promised and fruitful land—do Thou be a husband and a father to me and mine; and oh forbid that, in adversity or in prosperity, by day or by night, in the solitude or in the city, we should ever forget Thee!"

In an age when, amongst our peasantry in particular, family prayer is so extensively and mournfully neglected—when the farmer, the manufacturer, the mechanic, not to mention the more elevated orders, have ceased to obey the injunction laid upon all Presbyterian parents in baptism—it is refreshing to look back to the time when the taking of the book, as it was termed, returned as regularly as the rising and the setting of the sun—when the whole household convened together, morning and evening, to worship the God of their fathers. In public worship, as well as in private prayer, there is much of comforting and spiritual support. It is pleasing, as well as useful, to unite voice with voice, and heart with heart; it is consolatory, as well as comfort-

ing, to retire from the world to commune with one's heart and be still ; but it is not the less delightful and refreshing to unite in family prayer the charities and sympathies of life—to come to the throne of mercy and of pardon in the attitude and capacity of parent and child, brother and sister, husband and wife, master and servant, and to express, in the common confession, petition, and thanksgiving, our united feelings of sinfulness, resignation, and gratitude.

Milton paints beautifully the first impressions which death made upon Eve ; and sure I am that, though conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity, I remember the time when I was entirely ignorant of death. I had indeed been informed that I had a father ; but as to any change which had been effected upon him by death, I was as ignorant as if I had been embowered from my birth amidst the evergreens of paradise. Everything around me appeared to be permanent and undying, almost unchanging. The sun set only to rise again ; the moon waned, and then reappeared, reassured in strength and repaired in form ; the stars, in their courses, walked steadily and uniformly over my head ; the flowers faded and flourished ; the birds exchanged silence for song ; the domestic animals were all my acquaintances from the dawn of memory. To me, and to those associated with me, similar events happened : we ate, drank, went to sleep, and arose again, with the utmost regularity. I had, indeed, heard of death as of some inconceivable evil ; but, in my imagination, its operation had no figure. I had not even seen a dog die ; for my father's favourite Gipsy lived for nine years after his death—a cherished and respected pensioner. At last, however, the period arrived when the spell was to be broken for ever—when I was to be let into the secret of the house of

corruption, and made acquainted with the change which death induces upon the human countenance.

My grandmother had attained a very advanced old age, yet was she straight in person, and perfect in all her mental faculties. Her countenance, which I still see distinctly, was expressive of good-will; and the wrinkles on her brow served to add a kind of intellectual activity to a face naturally soft, and even comely. She had told me so many stories, given me so many good advices, initiated me so carefully in the elements of all learning, "the small and capital letters," and, lastly, had so frequently interposed betwixt me and parental chastisement, that I bore her as much good-will and kindly feeling as a boy of seven years could reasonably be expected to exhibit. True it is, and of verity, that this kindly feeling was not incompatible with many acts of annoyance, for which I now take shame and express regret; but these acts were anything but malevolent, being committed under the view of self-indulgence merely. It was, therefore, with infinite concern that I received the intelligence from my mother that grannie was, in all probability, on the point of leaving us, and for ever.

"Leaving us, and for ever," sounded in my ears like a dream of the night, in which I had seen the stream which passed our door swell suddenly into a torrent, and the torrent into a flood, carrying me, and everything around me, away in its waters. I felt unassured in regard to my condition, and was half disposed to believe that I was still asleep and imagining horrors! But when my mother told me that the disease which had for days confined my grandmother to bed would end in death—in other words, would place her alongside of my father's grave in the churchyard of Closeburn—I felt that I was not asleep, but awake to some

dreadful reality, which was about to overtake us. From this period till within a few hours of her dissolution, I kept cautiously and carefully aloof from all intercourse with my grandmother—I felt, as it were, unwilling to renew an intercourse which was so certainly, and so soon, and so permanently to be interrupted; so I betook myself to the hills, and to the pursuit of all manner of bees and butterflies. I would not, in fact, rest; and as I lay extended on my back amidst the heath, and marked the soft and filmy cloud swimming slowly along, “making the blue one white,” I thought of her who was dying, and of some holy and happy residence far beyond the utmost elevation of cloud, or sun, or sky. Again and again I have risen from such reveries to plunge myself headlong into the pool, or pursue with increased activity the winged insects which buzzed and flitted around me. Strange indeed are the impressions made upon our yet unstamped, unbiassed nature; and could we in every instance recall them, their history would be so unlike our more recent experience, as to make us suspect our personal identity. I do not remember any more recent feeling which corresponded in character and degree with this, whose wayward and strange workings I am endeavouring to describe; and yet in this case, and in all its accompaniments, I have as perfect a recollection of facts, and reverence of feeling, as if I were yet the child of seven, visited for the first time with tidings of death.

My grandmother’s end drew nigh, and I was commanded, or rather dragged, to her bedside. There I still see her lying, calm, but emaciated, in remarkably white sheets, and a head dress which seemed to speak of some approaching change. It was drawn closely over her brow, and covered the chin up to her lips. Nature had manifestly given up the contest; and

although her voice was scarcely audible, her reason evidently continued unclouded and entire. She spoke to me slowly and solemnly of religion, obedience to my mother, and being obliging to every one; laid, by my mother's assistance, her hand upon my head, as I kneeled at her bedside, and in a few instants had ceased to breathe. I lifted up my head at my mother's bidding, and beheld a corpse. What I saw or what I felt, I can never express in words. I can only recollect that I sprang immediately, horror-struck, to my feet, rushed out at the door, made for the closest and thickest part of the brushwood of the adjoining brae, and, casting myself headlong into the midst of it, burst into tears. I wept, nay, roared aloud; my grief and astonishment were intense whilst they lasted, but they did not last long; for when I returned home about dusk, I found a small table spread over with a clean cloth, upon which was placed a bottle with spirits, a loaf of bread, and cheese cut into pretty large pieces. Around this table sat my mother, with two old women from the nearest hamlet. They were talking in a low but in a wonderfully cheerful tone, as I thought, and had evidently been partaking of refreshment. Being asked to join them, I did so; but ever and anon the white sheet in the bed, which shaped itself out most fearfully into the human form, drew my attention, and excited something of the feeling which a ghost might have occasioned. I had ceased in a great measure to feel for my grandmother's death. I now felt the alarms and agitations of superstition. It was not because she had fled from us that I was agitated, but because that, though dead, she still seemed present, in all the inconceivable mystery of a dead life!

The funeral called forth, from the adjoining glens and cottages, a respectable attendance, and at the same

time gave me an opportunity of partaking, unnoticed, of more refreshment than suited the occasion or my years; in fact, I became little less than intoxicated, and was exceedingly surprised at finding myself, towards evening, in the midst of the same bush where I had experienced my paroxysm of grief, singing aloud, in all the exultation of exhilarated spirits. Such is infancy and boyhood—

“The tear forgot, as soon as shed.”

I returned, however, home, thoughtful and sad, and never, but once, thought the house so deserted and solitary as during that evening.

My mother was not a Cameronian by communion, but she was in fact one in spirit. This spirit she had by inheritance, and it was kept alive by an occasional visit from “Fairly.” This redoubted champion of the Covenant drew me one day towards him, and, placing me betwixt his knees, proceeded to question me how I would like to be a minister; and as I preserved silence, he proceeded to explain that he did not mean a parish minister, with a manse and glebe and stipend, but a poor Cameronian hill-preacher like himself. As he uttered these last words, I looked up, and saw before me an austere countenance, and a threadbare black coat hung loosely over what is termed a hunchback. I had often heard Fairly mentioned, not only with respect, but enthusiasm, and had already identified him and his followers with the “guid auld persecuted folks” of whom I had heard so much. Yet there was something so strange, not to say forbidding, in Fairly’s appearance, that I hesitated to give my consent, and continued silent; whereupon Fairly rose to depart, observing to my mother, that “my time was not come yet.” I did not then fully comprehend the meaning of this expres-

sion, nor do I perhaps now, but it passed over my heart like an awakening breeze over the strings of an Æolian harp. I immediately sprang forward, and catching Fairly by the skirt of his coat, exclaimed—

“Oh stay, sir!—dinna gang and leave us, and I will do onything ye like.”

“But then mind, my wee man,” continued Fairly in return, “mind that, if ye join us, ye will have neither house nor hame, and will often be cauld and hungry, without a bed to lie on.”

“I dinna care,” was my uncouth, but resolute response.

“There’s mair metal in that callant than ye’re aware o’,” rejoined Fairly, addressing himself to my mother, and looking all the while most affectionately into my countenance. “Here, my little fellow, here’s a penny for ye, to buy a *charitcher*; and gin ye leeve to be a man, ye’ll aiblins be honoured wi’ upholding the doctrines which it contains, on the mountain and in the glen, when my auld banes are mixed wi’ the clods.”

I looked again at Fairly as he pronounced these words, and had an angel descended from heaven in all the radiance and benignity of undimmed glory, such a presence would not have impressed me more deeply with feelings of love, veneration, and esteem.

This colloquy, short as it was, exercised considerable influence over my future life.

I cannot suppose anything more imposing, and better calculated to excite the imagination, than the meetings of these Cameronians or hill-men. They are still vividly under my view: the precipitous and green hills of Durrisdeer on each side—the tent adjoining to the pure mountain stream beneath—the communion table stretching away in double rows from the tent towards the acclivity—the vast multitude in one wide amphitheatre round

and above—the spring gushing solemnly and copiously from the rock, like that of Meribah, for the refreshment of the people—the still or whispering silence when Fairly appeared, with the Bible under his arm, without gown, or band, or any other clerical badge of distinction—the tent-ladder, ascended by the bald-headed and venerable old man, and his almost divine regard of benevolence, cast abroad upon a countless multitude—his earnestness in prayer—his plain and colloquial style of address—the deep and pious attention paid to him, from the plaided old woman at the front of the tent to the gaily dressed lad and lass on the extremity of the ground—his descent, and the communion service—his solemn and powerful consecration prayer, over which the passing cloud seemed to hover, and the sheep on the hill-side to forego for a time their pasture—his bald head (like a bare rock encompassed with furze) slightly fringed with grey hairs, remaining uncovered under the plashing of a descending torrent, and his right hand thrust upward, in holy indignation against the proffered umbrella;—all this I see under the alternating splendours and darkenings, lights and shadows, of a sultry summer's day. The thunder is heard in its awful sublimity; and whilst the hearts of man and of beast are quaking around and above, Fairly's voice is louder and more confirmed, his countenance is brighter, and his eye more assured, and stedfastly fixed on the muttering heaven. "Thou, O Lord, art ever near us, but we perceive Thee not; Thou speakest from Zion, and in a still small voice, but it is drowned in the world's murmurings. Then Thou comest forth as now, in thy throne of darkness, and encompasseth thy Sinai with thunderings and lightnings; and then it is, that like silly and timid sheep who have strayed from their

pasture, we stand afar off and tremble. *This* flash of thy indignant majesty, which has now crossed these aged eyes, might, hadst Thou but so willed it, have dimmed them for ever; and this vast assemblage of sinful life might have been, in the twinkling of an eye, as the hosts of Assyria, or the inhabitants of Admah and Zeboim; but Thou knowest, O Lord, that Thou hast more work for me, and more mercy for them, and that the prayers of penitence which are now knocking hard for entrance and answer, must have time and trial to prove their sincerity. So be it, good Lord! for thine ire, that hath suddenly kindled, hath passed; and the Sun of Righteousness himself hath bid his own best image come forth from the cloud to enliven our assembly." In fact, the thunder-cloud had passed, and under the strong relief of a renewed effulgence, was wrapping in its trailing ascent the summits of the more distant mountains.

"I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
From whence doth come mine aid:
My safety cometh from the Lord"—

These were the notes which pealed in the after-service of that memorable occasion from at least ten thousand hearts. Nor is there any object in nature better calculated to call forth the most elevated sentiments of devotion, than such a simultaneous concordant union of voice and purpose, in praise of Him "who heaven and earth hath made."

"All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord"—

So says the divine monitor; but what says modern fashion and refinement? Let them answer in succession for themselves. And first, then, in reference to fashion. When examined and duly purged, she deposeth that the time was when men were not

ashamed to praise their God "before his people all;" when they even rejoiced with what tones they might to unite their tributary stream of praise to that vast flood which rolled, in accumulated efficacy, towards the throne on high; when lord and lady, husbandman and mechanic, learned and unlearned, prince and people, sent forth their hearts in their united voices towards Him who is the God over all and the Saviour of all. She further deposeth that the venerated founders of our Presbyterian Church were wont to scare the curlew and the bittern of the mountain and the marsh by their nightly songs of solemn and combined thanksgiving and praise; and that, with the view of securing a continuance of this delightful exercise, our Confession of Faith strictly enjoins us, providing, by the reading of "the line," against cases of extreme ignorance or bodily infirmity; and yet she averreth that, in defiance of law and practice, of reason and revelation, of good feeling and common-sense, hath it become unfashionable to be seen or to be heard praising God. It is vulgar and unseemly, it would appear, in the extreme, to modulate the voice or to compose the countenance into any form or expression which might imply an interest in the exercise of praise. The young Miss in her teens, whose tender and susceptible heart is as wax to impressions, is half betrayed into a spontaneous exhibition of devotional feeling; but she looks at the marble countenance and changeless aspect of Mamma, and is silent. The home-bred, unadulterated peasant would willingly persevere in a practice to which he has been accustomed from his first entrance at the church stile; but his superiors, from pew and gallery, discountenance his feelings, and indicate by the carelessness—I had almost added the levity—of their demeanour, that

they are thinking of anything, of everything, but God's praise; whilst the voices of the hired precentor and of a few old women and rustics are heard uniting in suppressed and feeble symphony. Nay, there is a case still more revolting than any which has been hitherto denounced—that, namely, of our young probationers and ministers, who, in many instances, refuse even in the pulpit that example which, with their last breath, they were perhaps employed in recommending. There they sit or stoop whilst the psalm is singing, busily employed in revising their ms., or in reviewing the congregation, in selecting and marking for emphasis the splendid passages, or in noting for observation whatever of interesting the dress or the countenances of the people may suggest. So much for *fashion*; and now for the deposition of *refinement* on the same subject.

Refinement has indeed much to answer for; she has brushed the coat threadbare; she has wiredrawn the thread till it can scarcely support its own weight; and in no one instance has her besetting sin been more conspicuous than in her intercommunings with our church psalmody. The old women who, from the original establishment of Presbytery, have continued to occupy and grace our pulpit stairs, are oftentimes defective in point of sweetness and delicacy of voice; in fact, they do not sing, but croon, and in some instances they have even been known to outrun the precentor by several measures, and to return upon him a second time ere the conclusion of the line. What then?—they always croon in a low key; and if *they* are gratified, their Maker pleased, and the congregation in general undisturbed, the principal parties are disposed of. There is no doubt something unpleasant to a refined ear in the jarring concord of a rustic

euphony, when, in full voice, of a sacramental Sabbath evening, they are inclined to hold on with irresistible swing. But what they want in harmony, they have in good-will; what they lose in melody, they gain in the ringing echo of their voices from roof and ceiling. And were it possible, without silencing the uninstructed, to gratify and encourage the refined and the disciplined, then were there at once a union and a unison of agreeables; but as this object has never been effected, or even attempted, and as refinement has at once laid aside all regard for the humble and untrained worshipper, and has set her stamp and seal upon a trained band of vocal performers, it becomes the duty of all rightly constituted minds to oppose, if they cannot stem the tide—to mark and stigmatize that as unbecoming and absurd which the folly of the age would have us consider as improvement. It is of little moment whether the office of psalm-singing be committed to a select band, who surround, with their merry faces and tenor pipes, the precentor's seat, or be entrusted to separate parties scattered through the congregation; still, so long as the *taught* alone are expected to sing, the original end of psalm-singing is lost sight of, the habits of a Presbyterian congregation are violated, and *manner* being preferred to *matter*—an attuned voice to a fervent spirit—a manifest violence is done to the feelings of the truly devout.

No two things are probably more distinct and separate in the reader's mind than preaching and fishing; yet in mine they are closely associated.

And is not fishing or angling with the rod a most fascinating amusement? There is just enough of address required to admit and imply a gratifying admixture of self-approbation; and enough, at the same time, of chance or circumstance, over which the

fisher has no control, to keep expectation alive even during the most deplorable luck. Hence a real fisher is seldom found, from want of success merely, to relinquish his rod in disgust; but, with the spirit of a true hill-man of the old school, he is patient in tribulation, rejoicing in hope. "*Meliorè opera*" is written upon his countenance; and whilst mischance and misfortune haunt him, it may be, from stream to stream, or from pool to pool, he still looks down the glen and along the river's course; he still regards in anxious expectation the alluring and more promising curl, the circulating and creamy froth, the suddenly broken and hesitating gullet, and the dark clayey bank, under which the water runs thick and the foam-bells figure bright and starry. He knows that one single hour of successful adventure, when the cloud has ascended and the shadow is deep, and the breeze comes upwards on the stream, and the whole finny race are in eager expectation of the approaching shower—that one single hour of this description will amply repay him for every discouragement and misfortune.

And who that has enjoyed this one little hour of success would consider the purchase as dearly made? Is it with bait that you are angling?—and in the solitude of a mountain glen can you discover the stream of your hope, stretching away like a blue pennant waving into the distance, and escaping from view behind some projecting angle of the hill? Your fishing-rod is tight and right, your line is in order, your hook penetrates your finger to the barb; other companions than the plover, the lark, and the water-wagtail you have none. This is no hour for chirping grasshopper, or flaunting butterfly, or booming bee; the overshadowed and ruffled water receives your bait with a plump; and ere it has travelled to the distance of six feet, it is nailed down

to the leeward of a stone. You pull recklessly and fearlessly, and flash after flash, and flap after flap, comes there in upon your hull the spotted and ponderous inmate of the flood! Or is it the fly with which you are plying the river's fuller and more seaward flow? The wide extent of streamy pool is before you, and beyond your reach. Fathom after fathom goes reeling from your pin, but still you are barely able to drop the far fly into the distant curl. "Habet!" he has it; and proudly does he bear himself in the plenitudes of strength, space, and freedom. Your line cuts and carves the water into all manner of squares, triangles, and parallelograms. Now he makes a few capers in the air, and shows you, as an opera dancer would do, his proportions and agility: now again he is sulky and restive, and gives you to understand that the *vis inertiae* is strong within him. But fate is in all his operations, and his last convulsive effort makes the sand and the water commingle at the landing-place.

The resort of the fisher is amidst the retirements of what, and what alone, can be justly denominated undegraded nature. The furnace, and the manufactory, and the bleaching-green, and the tall red smoke-vomiting chimney are his utter aversion. The village, the clachan, the city, he avoids: he flies from them as something intolerably hostile to his hopes. He holds no voluntary intercourse with man, or with his petty and insignificant achievements. "He lifts his eyes to the hills," and his steps lie through the retired glen, and winding vale, and smiling strath, up to the misty eminence and cairn-topped peak. He catches the first beams of the sun, not through the dim and disfiguring smoke of a city, but over the sparkling and diamonded mountain, above the unbroken and undulating line of the distant horizon.

His conversation is with heaven, with the mist, and the cloud, and the sky; the great, the unmeasured, the incomprehensible are around him; and all the agitation and excitement to which his hopes and fears as a mere fisher subject him, cannot completely withdraw his soul from that character of sublimity by which the mountain solitude is so perceptibly impressed.

I shall never forget one day's sport. The morning was warm, and in fact somewhat sultry; and swarms of insects arose on my path. As every gullet was gushing with water, it behoved me to ascend, even beyond my former travel, to the purest streams or feeders, which ran unseen, in general, among the hills. The clouds, as I hurried on my way, began to gather up into a dense and darkening awning. There was a slight and somewhat hesitating breeze on the hill-side, for I could see the heath and bracken bending under it, but it was scarcely perceptible beneath. This, however, I regretted the less, as the mountain torrent to which I had attached myself was too precipitous and streamy in its course to require the aids of wind and curl to forward the sport. Let the true fisher—for he only can appreciate the circumstances—say what must have been my delight, my rapture, as I proceeded to prepare my rod, open out my line over the brink of a gullet, along which the water rushed like porter through the neck of a bottle, and at the lower extremity of which the froth tilted round and round in most inviting eddies! Here there was no springing of trouts to the surface, nor coursing of alarmed shoals beneath. The darkened heaven was reflected back by the darker water; and the torrent kept dashing, tumbling, and brawling along under the impulse and agitation of a swiftly ebbing flood. I had hit upon that very critical shade, betwixt the high brown and soft blue colour, which every

mountain angler knows well how to appreciate ; and I felt as if every turn and entanglement of my line formed a barrier betwixt me and paradise. The very first throw was successful, ere the bait had travelled twice round the eddy at the bottom of the gullet. When trouts in such circumstances take at all, they do so in good earnest. They are all on the outlook for food, and dash at the swiftly-descending bait with a freedom and good-will which almost uniformly insures their capture. And here, for the benefit of bait fishers, it may be proper to mention, that success depends not so much on the choosing and preparing of the worms—though these undoubtedly are important points—as in the throwing and drawing, or rather dragging of the line. In such mountain rapids, the trout always turn their heads to the current, and never gorge the bait till they have placed themselves lower down in the water ; consequently, by pulling *downwards*, two manifest advantages are gained : the trout is often hooked without gorging, or even biting at all, and the current assists the fisher in landing his prize, which, in such circumstances, may be done in an instant, and at a single pull. But to return. My success on this occasion was altogether beyond precedent : at every turn and wheel of the winding torrent, I was sure to grace the green turf or sandy channel with another and another yellow-sided and brightly-spotted half-pounder. The very sheep, as they travelled along their mountain pathway, stopped and gazed down on the sport. The season was harvest, and the Lammas floods had brought up the bull or sea trouts. I had all along hoped that one or two stragglers might have reached my position ; and this hope had animated every pull. It was not, however, till the day was well advanced, that I had the good fortune to succeed in hooking a large, powerful, active,

and new-run "milter." In fisher weight he might seem *five*, but in imperial he would possibly not exceed two or three pounds. Immediately upon his feeling the steel he plunged madly, flung himself into the air, dived again into the depths, and flounced about in the most active and courageous style imaginable. At last, taking the stream-head somewhat suddenly, he showed tail and fin above the surface of the water, brought his two extremities almost into contact, shot himself upwards like an arrow, and was off with the hook and a yard of line ere I had time to prepare against the danger; but as unforeseen circumstances led to this catastrophe, occurrences equally unlooked-for repaired the loss; for in an instant I secured the disengaged captive whilst floundering upon the sand, having, by his headlong precipitancy, fairly pitched himself out of his native element. There he lay, like a ship in the shallows, exhibiting scale and fin, and shoulder and spot, of the most fascinating hue; and, ever and anon, as the recollection of the fatal precipitancy seemed to return upon him, he cut a few capers and exhibited a few somersets, which contributed materially to insure his capture, and increase my delight.

By this time I had ascended nearly to the source of the stream; and at every opening up of the glen I could perceive a sensible diminution of the current. I was quite alone in the solitude; and my unwonted success had rendered me insensible to the escape of time. The glen terminated at last in a linn and scaur, beyond which it did not appear probable that trouts would ascend. Whilst I was engaged in the consideration of the objects around me, with a reference to my return home, I became all at once enveloped in mist and darkness. The mist was dense and close and suffocating, while the darkness increased every instant. I felt

a difficulty in breathing, as if I had been shut up in an empty oven; my situation stared me at once in the face, and I took to my heels over the heath, in what I considered a homeward direction. Now that my ears were relieved from the gurgling sound of the water, I could perceive, through the stillness of the air, that the thunder was behind me. I had been taught to consider thunder as the voice of the "Most High," when He speaks in his wrath, and felt my whole soul prostrated under the divine rebuke. Some passages of the 18th Psalm rushed on my remembrance; and as the lightnings began to kindle, and the thunder to advance, I could hear myself involuntarily repeating—

“Up from his nostrils came a smoke,
And from his mouth there came
Devouring fire; and coals by it
Were turned into flame.

“The Lord God also in the heavens
Did thunder in his ire,
And there the Highest gave his voice—
Hail-stones and coals of fire.”

Such was the subject of my meditation, as the muttering and seemingly subterraneous thunder boomed and quavered behind me. At last, one broad and whizzing flash passed over, around, beneath, and I could almost imagine, *through* me. The clap followed instantly, and, by its deafening knell, drove me head foremost into the heathy moss. Had the earth now opened (as to Curtius of old) before me, I should certainly have dashed into the crater, in order to escape from that explosive omnipotence which seemed to overtake me. Peal after peal pitched, with a rending and tearing sound, upon the drum of my ear and the parapet of my brain; whilst the mist and the darkness were

kindled up around me into an open glow. I could hear a strange rush upon the mountain, and along the glen, as if the Solway had overleaped all bounds, and was eareering some thousand feet abreast over Criffel and Queenberry. Down it came at last, in a swirl and a roar, as if rocks and cairns and heath were comingled in its sweep. This terrible blast was only the immediate precursor of a hail-storm, which, descending at first in separate and distinct pieces, as if the powers of darkness and uproar had been pitching marbles, came on at last with a rush, as if Satan himself had been dumriddling the elements. The water in the moss-hag rose up, and boiled and sputtered in the face of heaven, and a rock, underneath the hollow corner of which I had now crept on hands and knees, rattled all over, as if assailed by musketry. I lay now altogether invisible to mortal eye, amidst the mighty movements of the elements—a thing of nought, endeavouring to crawl into nonentity—a tiny percipient amidst the blind urgency of nature. I lay in all the prostration of a bruised and subdued spirit, praying fervently and loudly unto God that He might be pleased to cover me with his hand till his wrath was overpast. And, to my persuasion at the time, my prayers were not altogether insufficient: the storm softened, rain succeeded hail, a pause followed the hurricane, and the thunder's voice had already travelled away over the brow of the onward mountain.

Whilst I was debating with myself whether it were safer, now that the night had fairly closed in upon the pathless moor, to remain all night in my present position, or to attempt once more my return home, I heard, all of a sudden, the sound of human voices, which the violence of the storm had prevented me from sooner perceiving. I scarcely knew whether I was more

alarmed or comforted by this discovery. From my previous state of agitation, combined with my early and rooted belief in all manner of supernaturals, I was strongly disposed to terror; but the accents were so manifestly human, that, in spite of my apprehensions, they tended to cheer me. As I continued, therefore, to listen with mouth and ears, the voices became louder and louder, and more numerous, mixed and commingled as they appeared at last to be with the tread and the splash of horses' feet. These demonstrations of an approaching cavalcade naturally called upon me to narrow, as much and as speedily as possible, my circumference; in other words, to creep, as it were, into my shell, by occupying the farthest extremity of the recess, to which I betook myself at first for shelter, and now for concealment. There I lay like a limpet stuck to the rock, against which I could feel my heart beat with accelerated rapidity. In this situation I could distinguish voices and expressions, and ultimately unravel the import of a conversation interlarded with oaths and similar ornamental flourishes. There was a proposal to halt, alight, and refresh in this sequestered situation. Such a proposal, as may readily be supposed, was to me anything but agreeable. Here was I, according to my reckoning, surrounded by a band of robbers, and liable every instant to detection. Fire-arms were talked of, and preparations, offensive and defensive, were proposed. I could distinctly smell gunpowder. In the meantime, a fire was struck up at no great distance, under the glare of which I could distinguish horses heavily panniered, and strange-looking countenances, congregating within fifty paces of my retreat. The shadow of the intervening corner of the rock covered me, otherwise immediate detection would have been inevitable. The thunder and lightning

with all their terrors were nothing to this. In the one case, I was placed at the immediate disposal of a merciful, as well as a mighty Being; but at present I ran every risk of falling into the hands of those whose counsels I had overheard, and whose tender mercies were only cruelty. As I lay—rod, basket, and fish crumpled up into a corner of contracted dimensions—all ear, however, and eye towards the light—I could mark the shadows of several individuals who were manifestly engaged in the peaceful and ordinary process of eating and drinking; hands, arms, and flagons projected in lengthened obscurity over the mass, and intimated, by the rapidity and character of their movements, that jaws were likewise in motion. The long pull, with the accompanying *smack*, were likewise audible; and it was manifest that the repast was not more substantial than the beverage was exhilarating. “Word follows word, from question answer flows.” Dangers and contingencies—which, while the flame was kindling and the flagon was filling, seemed to agitate and interest all—were now talked of as bugbears; and oaths of heavy and horrifying defiance were hurled into the ear of night, with many concomitant expressions of security and self-reliance. The night, though dark, had now become still and warm; and the ground which they occupied, like my own retreat, had been partially protected from the hail and the rain by the projecting rock. The stunted roots of burnt heath, or “brins,” served them plentifully for fuel; and altogether their situation was not so uncomfortable as might have been expected. Still, however, their character, employment, and conversation appeared to me a fearful mystery. One thing, however, was evident, that they conceived themselves as engaged in some illegal transactions. Their whole revel was tainted with treason and in-

subordination : kings and rulers were disposed of with little ceremony ; and excise officers, in particular, were visited with anathemas not to be mentioned. At this critical moment, when the whole party seemed verging towards downright intoxication, a pistol bullet burst itself to atoms on the projecting corner of the rock ; and the report which accompanied this demonstration was followed up by oaths of challenge and imprecation. The fire went out as if by magic, and an immediate rush to arms, accompanied by shots and clashing of lethal weapons, indicated a struggle for life.

“ Stand and surrender, you smuggling scoundrels ! or by all that is sacred, not one of you shall quit this spot in life ! ”

This salutation was answered by a renewed discharge of musketry ; and the darkness, which was relieved by the momentary flash, became instantly more impenetrable than ever. Men evidently pursued men, and horses were held by the bridle, or driven into speed as circumstances permitted. How it happened that I neither screamed, fainted, nor died outright, I am yet at a loss to determine. The darkness, however, was my covering ; and even amidst the unknown horrors of the onset, I felt in some degree assured by the extinction of the fire. But this assurance was not of long continuance : the assailing party had evidently taken possession of the field ; and, after a few questions of mutual recognition and congratulation, proceeded to secure their booty, which consisted of one horse, with a considerable assortment of barrels and panniers. This was done under the light of the rekindled fire, around which a repetition of the former festivities was immediately commenced. The fire, however, now flared full in my face, and led to my immediate detection. I was summoned to come forth, with the muzzle of a pistol placed

within a few inches of my ear—an injunction which I was by no means prepared to resist. I rolled immediately outwards from under the rock, displaying my basket and rod, and screaming all the while heartily for mercy. At this critical moment a horse was heard to approach, and a challenge was immediately sent through the darkness,—every musket was levelled in the direction of the apprehended danger,—when a voice, to which I was by no means a stranger, immediately restored matters to their former bearing.

“Now, what is the meaning o’ a’ this, my lads? And how come the king’s servants to be sae ill lodged at this time o’ night? He must be a shabby landlord that has naething better than the bare heath and the hard rock to accommodate his guests wi’.”

“Oh, Fairly, my old man of the Covenant,” vociferated the leader of the party, “how come you to be keeping company with the whaup and the curlew at this time o’ night? But a drink is shorter than a tale; fling the bridle owre the grey yad’s shoulders, an’ ca’ her to the bent, till we mak ourselves better acquainted with this little natty gentleman, whom we have so opportunely encountered on the moor”—displaying, at the same time, a keg or small flask of liquor referred to, and shaking it joyously till it clunked again.

In an instant Fairly was stationed by the side of the fire, with a can of Martin’s brandy in his hands, and an expression of exceeding surprise on his countenance as he perceived my mother’s son in full length exhibited before him. I did not, however, use the ceremony of a formal recognition; but, rushing on his person, I clung to it with all the convulsive desperation of a person drowning. Matters were now adjusted by mutual recognitions and explanations; and I learned that I had been the unconscious spectator of a scuffle

betwixt the “king’s officers” and a “band of smugglers;” and that Fairly, who had been preaching and baptizing that day at Burnfoot, and was on his return towards Durrisdeer (where he was next day to officiate), had heard and been attracted to the spot by the firing. In these times to which I refer, the Isle of Man formed a depot for illegal traffic. Tea, brandy, and tobacco, in particular, found their way from the Calf of Man to the Rinns of Galloway, Richmaden, and the mouth of the Solway. From the latter depot the said articles were smuggled, during night marches, into the interior, through such byways and mountain passes as were unfrequented or inaccessible. After suitable libations had been made, I was mounted betwixt a couple of panniers, and soon found myself in my own bed, some time before

“That hour o’ night’s black arch the keystone!”

THE DETECTIVE'S TALE.

THE CHANCE QUESTION.

It is not long since the cleverest of these strangely constituted men called detectives [*entre nous* myself] went up to his superintendent with a very rueful face, and told him that all his energies were vain in discovering a clue to an extensive robbery of plate which had occurred in ——— Street some short time before.

"I confess myself fairly baffled," he said; and could say no more.

"With that singular foxhound organ of yours?" replied his superior. "The herring must have been well smoked."

"At the devil's own fire of pitch and brimstone," said the detective. "But the worst is, I have had no trail to be taken off. I never was so disconcerted before. Generally some object to point direction, if even only a dead crow or smothered sheep; but here, not even that."

"No trace of P—— or any of the English gang?"

"None; all beyond the bounds, or up chimneys, or down in cellars, or covered up in coal-bunkers. I am beginning to think the job to be of home manufacture."

"Generally a clumsy affair; and therefore very easy for a man of your parts. What reason have you?"

"Absolutely none."

"That is, I fancy," said the superintendent, "the thousand pounds of good silver, watches, and rings, are absolutely gone."

"You know my conditions," said the officer: "give me the thing stolen, and I will find to a living certainty the man who stole it; or give me the man who stole it, and I will find you to a dead certainty the thing stolen. But it's a deuced unfortunate thing that a man can't get even a sniff."

"Yes, especially when, as in your case, all his soul is in his nose."

"And with such a reward!" continued the chagrined officer; "scarcely anything so liberal has been offered in my time; but, after all, the reward is nothing—it is the honour of the force and one's character. It is well up for the night anyhow, and I rather think altogether, unless some flash come by telegraph."

"You have no other place you can go to now?" said the superintendent musingly, and not altogether satisfied.

"None," replied the officer resolutely. "I have been out of bed for ten nights—every den scoured, and every 'soup-kitchen'* visited, every swell watched and dogged, and every trull searched; I can do no more. It is now eleven, my eyes will hardly hold open, and I request to be allowed to go and rest for the present."

"As you like," replied the superintendent. "We are neither omniscient nor omnipotent."

"The people who get robbed think us both," said the officer; and taking his hat, left the office, and began to trudge slowly down the street. The orderly people had mostly retired to their homes. The midnight ghouls from the deep wynds and closes were beginning to form their gossiping clusters; the perambulators had begun their courses; and fast youths from the precincts of the College or the New Town were resuming their search for sprees, or determined to make them. There

* Places for melting plate.

were among them many clients of our officer, whom he knew, and had hopes of at some future day ; but now he surveyed them with the eye of one whose occupation for the time was gone. His sadness was of the colour of Jacques', but there was a difference: the one wove out of his melancholy golden verses in the forest of Arden ; our hero could not draw out of his even silver plate in the dens of Edinburgh. He had come to the Tron Kirk, and hesitated whether, after all, he should renounce his hunt for the night—true to the peculiarity of this species of men, whose game are wretched and wicked beings, always less or more between them and the wind's eye, and therefore always stimulating to pursuit ; but again he resolved upon home, or, rather, his heavy eyes and worn-out spirits resolved him, in spite of himself, and he turned south, in which direction his residence was. So on he trudged till he came about the middle part of the street called the South Bridge, when he heard pattering behind him the feet of a woman. She came up to him, and passed him, or rather was in the act of passing him, when, from something no better than a desire to stimulate activity, or rather to free himself from the conviction that he was utterly and entirely defeated, he turned round to the girl, whom he saw in an instant was a street-walker, and threw carelessly a question at her.

“Where are you going?”

“Home,” was the reply.

“Where do you live?”

“In Simon Square.”

Here he was at first inclined to make a stop, having put the questions more as common routine than with any defined intention ; but just as the girl came opposite to a lamp-post, and was on the eve of outstripping him, he said,

"Oh, by-the-bye, do you know any one thereabouts, or anywhere else, who mends rings?"

"Yes."

"Who is it?"

"Abram."

"What more?"

"I don't know his other name; we just call him Abram, and sometimes Jew Abram."

"Did you ever get anything mended by him?"

"No; but I bought a ring from him once."

"And what did you do with it?"

"I have it on my finger," she replied.

"Will you let me see it?" he continued.

"Oh yes."

And as they came forward to another lamp-post, he was shown the ring. He examined it carefully, taking from his waistcoat another, and comparing the two—"Won't do."

"How long is it since you made this purchase?"

"About ten days ago."

"And what did you pay for it?"

"Three and sixpence."

By this time they had got opposite the square where the girl lived. She crossed, and he followed, in the meantime asking her name.

"There is Abram's house," she said; "there's light in the window."

And the officer, standing a little to see where she went, now began to examine the outside of Abram's premises. A chink in the shutters showed him a part of the person of some one inside, whom he conjectured to be Abram sitting at his work. He opened the door, and it was as he thought. An old man was sitting at a bench, with a pair of nippers in his hand, peering into some small object.

"Can you mend that?" said the officer abruptly, and, without a word of prelocution, pressing into his hands a ring.

"Anything," was the prompt reply.

But no sooner had the ring come under the glance of his far-ben eye—

"Yes—ah! ye-es—well—no—no."

And the peering eye came, as it were, forward out of its recess, and scanned the face of the officer, who, on the other hand, was busy watching every turn of the Jew's features.

"No; I cannot mend that."

"Why? You said you could mend anything."

"Ye-es, anything; but not that."

"No matter—no harm in asking," replied the officer, as he looked round the apartment, and fixed his eye on the back wall, where, in utter opposition to all convenience, let alone taste, and even to the exclusion of required space, there were battered two or three coarse engravings."

"Good night!"

"Goo-ood night!"

"Now what, in the name of decoration, are these prints hung up on that wall for?" asked the officer of himself, without making any question of the import of the Jew's look, and his yes and no. He was now standing in the middle of the square, and, turning round, he saw the light put out. Another thought struck him, but whatever it was, it was the cause of a laugh that took hold of him, even in the grasp of his anxiety; yea, he laughed, for a detective, greatly more heartily than could be authorized by anything I have recorded.

"Why, the lower print is absolutely the old Jewish subject of the cup in the sack," he muttered, and laughed again. "Was ever detective so favoured?"

—a representation of concealed treasure on the very wall where that treasure is! Were the brethren fools enough to put the representation of a cup on Benjamin's sack?"

"Robertson!" he called to one of his men, whom, by the light at the street-end of the entry, he saw passing, "send two men here upon the instant."

"Yes, sir."

And then he began to examine more thoroughly the premises, to ascertain whether there were any exit-openings besides the door and window. There were none. He had a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes to wait, and five of these had not passed before he observed some one go up and tap at Abram's door. A question, though he did not hear it, must have been put by the Jew, for an answer, in a low voice, responded,

"Slabberdash!"

"The crack name of that fellow Clinch, whom I've been after for a week," said the officer to himself, as he kept in the shadow of a cellar which jutted out from the other houses.

The Jew had again answered, for the visitor repeated to himself, as if in fear and surprise, "Red-light," and, looking cautiously about him, made off.

"It is not my cue to follow," muttered the detective; "but I will do next best."

And hurrying out of the mouth of the entry at the heels of the visitor, he caught the policeman on the Nicolson Street beat almost immediately.

"Track that fellow," he said; "there—there, you see him—'tis Slabberdash; do not leave him or the front of his den till sunrise. I'll get a man for your beat."

"Yes, sir," replied the policeman, adroitly blowing out his bull's-eye and making off at a canter.

The officer returned to his post, and within the time the two assistants arrived.

"Go you, Reid, to the office, and send a man to supply Nicolson Street beat till Ogilvy return; he's on commission; come back instantly."

The man obeyed with alacrity.

"And now, Jones, you and your neighbour take charge of that door—keep seeing it without it seeing; you understand? Keep watch; and if any one approach, scan him for Slabberdash, but take care he doesn't see you. I will relieve you at shutters-down in the morning; meanwhile, I'm at home for report or exigency."

"I comprehend," replied the man, "and will be careful."

The officer took for home, weary and drowsy, though a little awakened by the events of one half-hour. There was sight of game, as well as scent. The Jew's look by itself was not much, yet greatly more to the eye of a detective than even an expert physiognomist could imagine. The picture-plastered wall was more; the cup in the sack was merely an enlivening joke; but Slabberdash was no joke, as many a *douce* burgher in Edinburgh knew to his cost. The fellow was a match for the father of cheats and lies himself; and therefore it could be no dishonour to our clever detective that hitherto he had had no chance with him, any more than if he had been James Maccoul, or the great Mahoun.

Meanwhile, the other watch having arrived, the two kept up their surveillance; nor would they be without something to report to their officer, were it nothing more than that little Abram—for he was very diminutive—about one in the morning rather surprised one of the guard, who was incautiously too near the house,

by slowly opening the door, and looking out with an inquiring eye, in his shirt; and upon getting a glimpse of the dark figure of the policeman, saying, as if to himself, though intended for the said dark figure, whoever it might be,

“I vash wondering if it vash moonlight.”

And, shutting the door hurriedly, he disappeared. About an hour afterwards, a tall female figure, coming up the entry from North Richmond Street, made a full stop, at about three yards from Abram’s door, and then darted off, but not before one of the guard had seen enough, as he thought, to enable him to swear that it was Slabberdash’s companion, a woman known by the slang name of Four-toed Mary, once one of the most dashing and beautiful of the local street-sirens. About an hour after that the two guards forgathered to compare notes.

“The devil is surely in that little man,” said the one who had heard the soliloquy about the moon; “for, whether or not he wanted light outside or in to drive away the shadows of his conscience, he served his purpose a few minutes since by lighting his lamp. I saw the light through the chinks, and venturing to listen, heard noises as of working. He is labouring at something, if not sweating.”

“Perhaps *melting*,” said the other, with a laugh. “But here comes our officer; there is never rest for that man when there’s a bird on the moor or a fox in the covert.”

The truth was, as the man said, the detective had gone home to sleep; but no sooner had he lain down than the little traces he had discovered began to excite his imagination, and that faculty, so suggestive in his class, getting inflamed, developed so many images in the camera of his mind, that he soon found sleep an

impossibility, and he was now there to know whether anything further had transpired. The men made their report, and he soon saw there was something more than ordinary in Abram's curiosity about the moon, and still more in the coincidence of the visits of Slabberdash and Four-toes. He had a theory, too, about the working, though it did not admit the melting. He knew better what to augur. But he had a fault to find, and he was not slow to find it.

"Why didn't one of you track Four-toes? One of you could have served here. She has been off the scene for three weeks, and is hiding. You ought to have known that a woman is a good subject for a detective. Her strength is her weakness, and her weakness our opportunity. But there's no help for it now. We must trace the links we have. If she come again, be more on the alert, and follow up the track. Keep your guard, and let not a circumstance escape you."

"The light is out again," remarked one of the men; "he has gone to bed."

"But not to sleep, I warrant," said his superior. "Look sharp and listen quick, and I will be with you when I promised."

He now proceeded to the office in the High Street, where he found the superintendent waiting for a report in another case. He recounted all he had seen and heard.

"You have a chance here," said the latter; "and, to confirm our hopes, I can tell you that Four-toes' mother gave yesterday to a shebeen-master in Toddrick's Close, one of the rings for a mutchkin of whisky; and, what is more, Clinch has been traced to the old woman's house in Blackfriars Wynd. I suspect that the picture's true after all. The cup is verily in Benjamin's sack."

Thus fortified, our detective sought his way again down the High Street; and as he had time to kill between that and the opening of the shutters in Simon Square, he paid a visit to Blackfriars Wynd, where he found his faithful myrmidon keeping watch over the old mother's house, like a Skye terrier at the mouth of a rat-hole. He here learned that Mary with the deficient toe had also been seen to go upstairs to her mother's garret, which circumstance accorded perfectly with the statement of the guard in the square, as no doubt she had returned home after being startled at the door of Abram. But then she was seen to go out again, about an hour before, though whither she went the watch could not say. The hour of appointment was now approaching. The day had broken amidst watery clouds, driven about by a fitful, gusty wind, and every now and then sending stiff showers of rain, sufficient to have cooled the enthusiasm of any one but a hunter after the doers of evil. He had been drenched two or three times, and now he felt that a glass of brandy was necessary as an auxiliary to internal resistance against external aggression. He was soon supplied, and, wending his way to the old rendezvous, he found his guard, but without any addition to their report of midnight. Abram was long of getting up, and it seemed that he was first roused by the clink of a milkwoman's tankard on the window-shutter. The door was slowly opened, but in place of the vender of milk handing in to her solitary customer the small half-pint, she went in herself, pails, and tankard, and all. Our detective marked the circumstance as being unusual, and, more than unusual still, the door was partly closed upon her as she entered. Then he began to think that she had nothing about her of the appearance of that class of young women.

"Has not that woman the appearance of Four-toes?" said the officer.

"I'm blowed if she's not the very woman I saw in the dark," said one of the men.

"Split," said the lieutenant; "but be within sign."

The precaution was wise. In a few minutes Abram's face was peering out at the door, not this time looking for the moon—more probably for the enemies of her minions; and what immediately succeeded showed that he had got a glimpse of the men, for by-and-by the milkmaid came forth and proceeded along the square.

"Go and look into her pails," said the lieutenant to Reid, as he hastened up to him. "Jones and I will remain for a moment here."

Reid set off, and disappeared in the narrow passage leading to West Richmond Street; but he remained only a short time.

"Crumbie is yeld! there's not a drop of milk in her pitchers," said he, on his return; "and it's no other than Four-toes."

"Ah, we've been seen by Abram," said the officer; "and the pitchers are sent away empty, which otherwise would have contained something more valuable than milk. After her again, and track her. Jones and I will pay Abram a morning visit."

The man again set off; and the officer and Jones having hung about a few minutes till Abram came out to open the shutters and afford them light inside, they caught their opportunity, and, just as the Jew was taking down the shattered boards, they darted into the house. Abram was at their heels in a moment.

"Vat ish it, gentlemen?"

"A robbery of plate has been committed," said the officer at once; "and I am here, with your permission no doubt, to search this house."

"Very goo-ood; there ish nothing but vat ish my property."

The officer had even already seen a half of the bench—which had consisted of two parts put together, probably originally intended for some other purpose than mending jewellery—had been removed and placed against the wall where Joseph and his brethren were standing round the cup in the sack, so that it was more difficult to reach the wall, though the device was clearly only the half of an idea, as the prints still stood above the bench, and might, by a sharp eye, have still suggested the suspicion that they were intended for something else than decoration, or even the gratification of a Jew's love for the legends of his country. But the officer did not go first to the suspected part. He took a hammer from his pocket, and began rapping all round the wall. "Stone, stone—lath, lath; ah, a compact house."

"Very goo-ood. Vash only three weeks a tenant."

The officer recollected the estimate of the time given by the street-walker, the *fons et origo* of all, and his hammer went more briskly till he came to the patriarchs. "Good head, that, of Joseph," he said with a laugh; "hollow, eh?"

"Vash a good head—not hollow; the best at the court of Pharaoh."

In an instant, a long chisel was through the picture; and in another, the poker, driven into the chisel-hole, and wrenched to a side, sent a thin covering of fir lath into a dozen of splinters. The hand did the rest. A cupboard was exposed to the eyes of the apparently wondering Israelite, containing, closely packed, an array of plate, watches, rings, and bijouterie, sufficient to make any eye besides a Jew's leap for the wish of possession.

Abram held up his hands in affected wonderment as

the lieutenant stood gazing at the treasure, and almost himself entranced. Jones was fixed to the ground; at one time looking at the costly treasure, at another at his superior, who had already, in this department of his art, acquired an envied reputation.

"Very goo-ood!" exclaimed Abram; "vash only here three weeks. What fools to leave here all this wonderful treasure!"

"Abram, will you be so good as take a walk up the High Street? Jones will show you the way. Breakfast will be waiting you. And do you," looking to Jones, "send down a box large enough to hold this silver, and two of our men to remove it to the office."

"Vash the other tenant," cried Abram, as he saw the plight he had got into—"vash not me, so help me the God of my forefathers, even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were just men, as I am a just man; it vash not me. Vash not the cup put in Benjamin's sack?"

The officer laughed—at this time inside, for it behoved him now to be grave—at the recollection of the strange coincidence of the picture and the stolen plate.

"Come," said Jones, "let us start;" and, clapping the Jew's old hat on the head of the little man, he took him under the arm to lead him out.

"After depositing him," whispered the officer into Jones' ear, "get help; proceed to Blackfriars, where Ogilvy is on the watch, and lay hold of Clinch. Some others will start in search of Reid, who may have tracked Four-toes, and seize her. You comprehend?"

"Perfectly. Come, Abram—unless you would like to walk at a safe distance?"

"Surely I would," replied Abram; "and so would every man who vash as innocent as the child vash born yesterday, or this minute."

When the prisoner had departed, the officer sat down

on the Jew's stool to rest himself, previous to making a survey of the articles, with reference to an inventory he had in his pocket. In this attitude, he took up a pair of Abram's nippers to fasten a link in his watch chain, which threatened to give way, so that he might very well have represented the master of the establishment sitting at his work. This observation is here made, as explanatory of another circumstance which presently occurred in this altogether remarkable case. The door, which Jones had closed after him, was opened stealthily; an old woman, wrapped up in a duffle cloak, slipped quietly and timidly in, and going round the end of the bench, whispered into the ear of the lieutenant—

“You'll be Abram, nae doubt?”

“Ay,” replied he.

“Ye're early at wark.”

“Ay.”

“Weel, the milk-woman—ye ken wha I mean?”

“Oh yes; Four-toes.”

“Ha! ha! ay, just Four-toes, that's Mary Burt; ah! she *was* a buxom lass in my kennin'. Weel, she has sent me to you, in a quiet way, ye ken, to tell ye that the p'lice have an e'e on you. That ill-lookin' scoondrel, the cleverest o' the 'tectives, as they ca' them—I never saw him mysel, but dootless you'll ken him—has been seen in the coort here, wi' twa o' his beagles, and you're to tak tent.”

“Yes, I know the ill-looking Christian dog. Vat ish your name?”

“Chirsty Anderson.”

“Where do you live, Christian?”

“In Wardrop's Coort, at the tap o' the lang stair. And the milk-maid—ha! ha!—says you're to shift the things to my room i' the dark'nin', whaur Geordie, my

laddie, will hae a plank lifted, and you can stow them awa, ayont the ken o' the cleverest o' them."

"And where ish the milk-woman?"

"In my room, pitchers an' a'."

"Well, tell her to keep there, as vash a prisoner, till I come to her place."

"I will."

"Isn't Geordie, my good woman, called Squint?"

"Just the same," she replied with a laugh; "and, ye ken, he has a right to a silver jug or twa, for he risked his neck for't as weel as Clinch."

"Surely, surely."

"But you're to gie me a ring to tak to her, for she's hard up, and I'll try Mr. E——e wi' 't at night, and get some shillings on't."

"Certainly, Christian—not a good name that; but here," taking her by the shoulders, and turning sharply in the direction of the door—for he was afraid she might notice the wreck made in the recess,—“look out at the door, and be on the good watch for the ill-looking dog."

"Ah, Abram, ye're sae clever! The deil's in them if they put saut on *your* tail."

"Here, give that to Four-toes, and tell her to keep good prisoner till I come."

"Just sae—a bonny ring!"

"Quick! turn to your right, and go by the Pleasance, along St. Mary's Wynd, up the High Street, to your home."

"Ay," replied the woman as she departed.

Not five minutes elapsed, when Jones and the two assistants with the box arrived; when the officer cried—

"Jones, follow up an old woman, in a grey duffle cloak, Christian Anderson by name, who is this moment

gone down by the Pleasance, to take St. Mary's Wynd and the High Street on her way to her room, in Wardrop's Court, at the top of the stair. Having seen her landed, stop five minutes at the door, to give her time to deliver a ring to Four-toes, then step in, and take the young woman to the office. You will find Geordie Anderson there also, the notorious Squint; so pick up a man as you go, and make Squint sure."

"At once, sir," replied the man, and was off.

By-and-by, and just as our officer was beginning to compare the plate with the inventory, the superintendent, who had got intelligence of the discovery, came hurrying in. They found, to their astonishment, that every article was there, excepting two rings—the one, probably, that offered to the shebeen-man by Four-toes' mother, and the other that which had been presently sent to Four-toes herself. A more complete recovery was perhaps never achieved; and it was all the more wonderful from the small beginning from which the trace had been detected. Having completed the examination and packed the treasure, which was presently removed to the office, the discoverer set about examining Abram's room; but so cunningly had the whole affair of the resettlement been conducted, that there was not found a trace of any kind to show his connection with the burglars. The joke of the man in reference to the process of melting had, however, had a narrow escape from being realized; for a kind of furnace had been erected with bricks, and a large crucible, sufficient to hold a Scotch pint of the "silver soup," was lying in what had been used as a coal-bunker. Meanwhile, Reid hurried in in great dejection, because the milk-woman had baffled him by going into a house in one of the wynds, and emerging by the back, and escaping.

"She's provided for," said the officer, "and you may go. I don't need you here; but you may go to Wardrop's Court, top of stair, and help Jones to take care of Four-toes and George Anderson called Squint; you know him?"

"Who that has once seen him will ever forget him?" replied the other. "When will Jones be there?"

"Just when you will arrive, giving you time to walk slow, like a good detective."

"And now," said our officer, as he proceeded to fasten up the door, "so much for a casual question,—a good night's work, and a reward of a hundred for recovering a thousand. I think I am entitled to my breakfast. It's not often a man makes so much of a morning." And resuming his deliberate walk—a characteristic, as he himself acknowledged, of a true thief-catcher—he repaired to a coffee-house in Nicolson Street, and allayed his hunger by coffee and a pound of chops. It was about ten o'clock when he reached the office, where he had the pleasant scene presented to him of a well-assorted bag of game—the last victims, Four-toes and Squint, being in the act of being deposited as he entered. The principals secure, the accessories were of less consequence. There were there Abram, Slabberdash, Squint, and Four-toes.

"To complete our complement we must have Four-toes' mother and Mrs. Anderson," he said to the superintendent, "and Reid and Jones will go and fetch them."

In the course of an hour both these ladies were brought into the already considerable company. That they were all surprised at the unexpected meeting, belongs to reasonable conjecture; and that Christian Anderson was more surprised than any of them, when she discovered her mistake in trusting her secrets to

the "ill-looking scoundrel" of a detective in place of Abram, is not less reasonable. Our officer was, in truth, too gallant a man to traverse those laws of etiquette which demand respect for the feelings of females, and he never once alluded to the *contretemps*. But Chirsty did not feel the same delicacy in regard to him, who she feared would hang her for misplaced confidence. She had no sooner recovered from her surprise than she cried out to him, in a shrill, piercing voice—

"I hope you'll hae mercy on me, sir. It wad do ye nae guid to stretch the wizzened craig o' an auld woman, because some silly words—I wish they had choket me—cam oot o't."

"They will never be brought against you," said he; "make yourself easy on that score."

"Then what am I here for?" she growled, as, relieved somewhat from her fear, she got into her natural temper.

"For agreeing to hide stolen property."

"Stolen property!" she replied. "And did ye no steal from me my secret about my puir laddie, that ye may string him to a wuddy? There's an auld sayin' that speech is silvern, but silence is gowden. Whaur is the difference between stealing frae me the siller o' my speech, and robbing a man o' the siller o' his jugs and teaspoons?"

"Quiet," he said calmly. "Abram, I want to speak with you. Separate these," he added, addressing one of the men.

And having got Abram by himself, he asked him if he was inclined to run the risk of a trial and condemnation, or tell the truth, and trust to the Royal mercy. The Jew hesitated; but our officer knew that a hesitating criminal is like a hesitating woman—each waits for an argument to resolve them against their faith and

honour. He knew that misfortune breaks up the bonds of etiquette, even among the virtuous; and that the honour among themselves, of which thieves boast, and a portion of mankind, for some strange reason, secretly approve, becomes weak in proportion to the danger of retributive justice. Not much given to speculate, he yet sometimes wondered why it was that one should be despised and treated harshly because he comes forward to serve the ends of justice and benefit society; but a less acute mind may feel no difficulty in accounting for the anomaly. The king's-evidence, while he proves himself a coward and false to his faith, acts from pure selfishness; and though he offers a boon to society, it is in reality a bargain which he drives for self-preservation. These speculations certainly did not pass through the mind of Abram, if his prevailing thought was not more likely in the form—

“If I can't get my pound of silver out of the Christian, I can at least keep my own pound of flesh.”

But whether he thought in this Jewish form or not, it is certain that he was not long in making as clean a breast as a Jew might be expected to make of the whole secret of the robbery. It was planned and executed, he said, by Slabberdash and Squint, and he agreed to become resetter on the condition of being allowed to retain a half of the proceeds. Four-toes brought the plate to him at half a dozen courses of her pitchers, and he had intended on that very day to melt all that was meltable. The watches and rings were to be reserved for opportunities, as occasions presented.

I give this story by way of an example of those strange workings in a close society, whereby often great events are discovered from what is termed chance. Such occurrences, however they may startle us, are all explainable by the laws of probabilities.

They occur often just in proportion to the increase of ramifications in civilised conditions. More people come into the plot; the increased activity drives the culprits to shifts, and these shifts are perilous from the very circumstance of being forced. We thus find detection often more easy and certain in populous towns, with a good staff of criminal officers, than in quieter places, where both plotters and shifts are proportionally fewer. If nature is always true to her purpose, so art, which is second nature, is equally true to hers, and man is better provided for than he deserves. I do not concern myself with the vulgar subject of punishments, never very agreeable to polite minds, and not at all times useful to those who gloat over descriptions of them. It is enough to say that the law was justly applied. Two got clear off—the mothers of Squint and Four-toes; and I may add that Chirsty Anderson probably afterwards acted up more to her own proverb, that “speech is silvern, but silence is golden.”

THE MERCHANT'S DAUGHTER.

ON the western skirts of the Torwood—famous in Scottish story for its association with the names of Wallace and Bruce—there stood, in the middle of the sixteenth century, a farm-house of rather superior appearance for the period.

This house was occupied at the time of which we speak by a person of the name of Henderson, who farmed a pretty extensive tract of land in the neighbourhood.

Henderson was a respectable man ; and although not affluent, was in tolerably easy circumstances.

The night on which our story opens, which was in the September of the year 1530, was a remarkably wild and stormy one. The ancient oaks of the Torwood were bending and groaning beneath the pressure of the storm ; and, ever and anon, large portions of the dark forest were rendered visible, and a wild light thrown into its deepest recesses by the flashing lightning.

The night, too, was pitch-dark ; and, to add to its dismal character, a heavy drenching rain, borne on the furious blast, deluged the earth, and beat with violence on all opposing objects.

“ A terrible night this, goodwife,” said Henderson to his helpmate, as he double-barred the outer door, while she stood behind him with a candle to afford him the necessary light to perform this operation.

“ I wish these streamers that have been dancing all night in the north may not bode some ill to poor Scotland. They were seen, I mind, just as they are now, eight nights precisely before that cursed battle of Flod-

den ; and it was well judged by them that some serious disaster was at hand."

"But I have heard you say, goodman," replied David Henderson's better-half, who—the former finding some difficulty in thrusting a bar into its place—was still detained in her situation of candle-holder, "that the fight of Flodden was lost by the king's descending from his vantage-ground."

"True, goodwife," said David ; "but was not his doing so but a means of fulfilling the prognostication ? How could it have been brought about else ?"

The door being now secured, Henderson and his wife returned without further colloquy into the house ; and shortly after, it being now late, retired to bed.

In the meantime, the storm continued to rage with unabated violence. The rush of the wind amongst the trees was deafening ; and at first faintly, but gradually waxing louder, as the stream swelled with the descending deluge of rain, came the hoarse voice of the adjoining river on the blast as it boiled and raged along.

Henderson had been in bed about an hour—it was now midnight—but had been kept awake by the tremendous sounds of the tempest, when, gently jogging his slumbering helpmate—

"Goodwife," he said, "listen a moment. Don't you hear the voice of some one shouting without ?"

They now both listened intently ; and loudly as the storm roared, soon distinguished the tramp of horses' feet approaching the house.

In the next moment, a rapid succession of thundering strokes on the door, as if from the butt end of a heavy whip, accompanied by the exclamations of—"Ho ! within there ! house, house !" gave intimation that the rider sought admittance.

"Who can this be ?" said Henderson, making an

attempt to rise ; in which, however, he was resisted by his wife, who held him back, saying—

“Never mind them, David ; let them just rap on. This is no time to admit visitors. Who can tell who they may be ?”

“And who cares who they may be ?” replied the sturdy farmer, throwing himself out of bed. “I’ll just see how they look from the window, Mary ;” and he proceeded to the window, threw it up, looked over, and saw beneath him a man of large stature, mounted on a powerful black horse, with a lady seated behind him.

“Dreadful night, friend,” said the stranger, looking up to the window occupied by Henderson, and to which he had been attracted by the noise made in raising it. “Can you give my fellow-traveller here shelter till the morning ? She is so benumbed with cold, so drenched with wet, and so exhausted by the fatigue of a long day’s ride, that she can proceed no further ; and we have yet a good fifteen miles to make out.”

“This is no hostel, friend, for the accommodation of travellers,” replied the farmer. “I am not in the habit of admitting strangers into my house, especially at so late an hour of the night as this.”

“Had I been asking for myself,” rejoined the horseman, “I should not have complained of your wariness ; but surely you won’t be so churlish as refuse quarters to a lady on such a night as this. She can scarce retain her seat on the saddle. Besides, you shall be handsomely paid for any trouble you may be put to.”

“Oh do, good sir, allow me to remain with you for the night, for I am indeed very much fatigued,” came up to the ear of Henderson, in feeble but silvery tones, from the fair companion of the horseman, with the addition, after a short pause, of “You shall be well rewarded for the kindness.”

At a loss what to do, Henderson made no immediate reply, but, scratching his head, withdrew from the window a moment to consult his wife.

Learning that there was a lady in the case, and judging from this circumstance that no violence or mischief of any kind was likely to be intended, the latter agreed, although still with some reluctance, to her husband's suggestion that the benighted travellers should be admitted.

On this resolution being come to, Henderson returned to the window, and thrusting out his head, exclaimed, "Wait there a moment, and I will admit you."

In the next instant he had unbarred the outer door, and had stepped out to assist the lady in dismounting; but was anticipated in this courtesy by her companion, who had already placed her on the ground.

"Shall I put up your horse, sir?" said Henderson, addressing the stranger, but now with more deference than before; as, from his dress and manner, which he had now an opportunity of observing more closely, he had no doubt he was a man of rank.

"Oh no, thank you, friend," replied the latter. "My business is pressing, and I must go on; but allow me to recommend this fair lady to your kindest attention. To-morrow I will return and carry her away."

Saying this, he again threw himself on his horse—a noble-looking charger—took bridle in hand, struck his spurs into his side, and regardless of all obstacles, and of the profound darkness of the night, darted off with the speed of the wind.

In an instant after, both horse and rider were lost in the gloom; but their furious career might for some time be tracked, even after they had disappeared, by the streams of fire which poured from the fierce colli-

sion of the horse's hoofs with the stony road over which he was tearing his way with such desperate velocity.

Henderson in the meantime had conducted his fair charge into the house, and had consigned her to the care of his wife, who had now risen for the purpose of attending her.

A servant having been also called up, a cheerful fire soon blazed on the hearth of the best apartment in the house—that into which the strange lady had been ushered.

The kind-hearted farmer's wife now also supplied her fair guest with dry clothing and other necessities, and did everything in her power to render her as comfortable as possible.

To this kindness her natural benevolence alone would have prompted her ; but an additional motive presented itself in the youth and extreme beauty of the fair traveller, who was, as the farmer's wife afterwards remarked to her husband, the loveliest creature her eyes ever beheld. Nor was her manner less captivating : it was mild and gentle, while the sweet silvery tones of her voice imparted an additional charm to the graces of her person.

Her apparel, too, the good woman observed, was of the richest description ; and the jewellery with which she was adorned, in the shape of rings, bracelets, etc., and which she deposited one after another on a table that stood beside her, with the careless manner of one accustomed to the possession of such things, seemed of great value.

A purse, also, well stored with golden guineas, as the sound indicated, was likewise thrown on the table with the same indifferent manner.

The wealth of the fair stranger, in short, seemed boundless in the eyes of her humble, unsophisticated attendant.

The comfort of the young lady attended to in every way, including the offer of some homely refreshment, of which, however, she scarcely partook, pleading excessive fatigue as an apology, she was left alone in the apartment to retire to rest when she thought proper ; the room containing a clean and neat bed, which had always been reserved for strangers.

On rejoining her husband, after leaving her fair guest, a long and earnest conversation took place between the worthy couple as to who or what the strangers could be. They supposed, they conjectured, they imagined, but all to no purpose. They could make nothing of it beyond the conviction that they were persons of rank ; for the natural politeness of the "guidwife" had prevented her asking the young lady any questions touching her history ; and she had made no communication whatever on the subject herself.

As to the lady's companion, all that Henderson, who was the only one of the family who had seen him, could tell, was, that he was a tall, dark man, attired as a gentleman, but so muffled up in a large cloak, that he could not, owing to that circumstance and the extreme darkness of the night, make out his features distinctly.

Henderson, however, expressed some surprise at the abruptness of his departure, and still more at the wild and desperate speed with which he had ridden away, regardless of the darkness of the night and of all obstacles that might be in the way.

It was what he himself, a good horseman, and who knew every inch of the ground, would not have done for a thousand merks ; and a great marvel he held it, that the reckless rider had got a hundred yards without horse and man coming down, to the utter destruction of both.

Such was the substance of Henderson's communications to his wife regarding the horseman. The latter's to him was of the youth and exceeding beauty of his fair companion, and of her apparently prodigious wealth. The worthy man drank in with greedy ears, and looks of excessive wonderment, her glowing descriptions of the sparkling jewels and heavily laden purse which she had seen the strange lady deposit on the table; and greatly did these descriptions add to his perplexity as to who or what this lady could possibly be.

Tired of conjecturing, the worthy couple now again retired to rest, trusting that the morning would bring some light on a subject which so sadly puzzled them.

In due time that morning came, and, like many of those mornings that succeed a night of storm, it came fair and beautiful. The wind was laid, the rain had ceased, and the unclouded sun poured his cheerful light through the dark green glades of the Torwood.

On the same morning another sun arose, although to shine on a more limited scene. This was the fair guest of David Henderson of Woodlands, whose beauty, remarkable as it had seemed on the previous night under all disadvantages, now appeared to surpass all that can be conceived of female perfection.

Mrs. Henderson looked, and, we may say, gazed on the fair stranger with a degree of wonder and delight, that for some time prevented her tendering the civilities which she came for the express purpose of offering. For some seconds she could do nothing but obey a species of charm, for which, perhaps, she could not have very well accounted. The gentle smile, too, and melodious voice of her guest, seemed still more fascinating than on the previous evening.

In the meantime the day wore on, and there was yet no appearance of the lady's companion of the former

night, who, as the reader will recollect, had promised to Henderson to return and carry away his fair lodger.

Night came, and still he appeared not. Another day and another night passed away, and still he of the black charger was not forthcoming.

The circumstance greatly surprised both Henderson and his wife; but it did not surprise them more than the lady's apparent indifference on the subject. She indeed joined, in words at least, in the wonder which they once or twice distantly hinted at the conduct of the recreant knight; but it was evident that she did not feel much of either astonishment or disappointment at his delay.

Again and again, another and another day came and passed away, and still no one appeared to inquire after the fair inmate of Woodlands.

It will readily be believed that the surprise of Henderson and his wife at this circumstance increased with the lapse of time. It certainly did. But however much they might be surprised, they had little reason to complain, so far, at any rate, as their interest was concerned, for their fair lodger paid them handsomely for the trouble she put them to. She dealt out the contents of her ample and well-stocked purse with unsparing liberality, besides presenting her hostess with several valuable jewels.

On this score, therefore, they had nothing to complain of; and neither needed to care, nor did care, how long it continued.

During all this time the unknown beauty continued to maintain the most profound silence regarding her history,—whence she had come, whither she was going, or in what relation the person stood to her who had brought her to Woodlands, and who now seemed to have deserted her.

All that the most ingeniously-put queries on the subject could elicit was, that she was an entire stranger in that part of the country; and an assurance that the person who brought her would return for her one day, although there were reasons why it might be some little time distant.

What these reasons were, however, she never would give the most remote idea; and with this measure of information were her host and hostess compelled to remain satisfied.

The habits of the fair stranger, in the meantime, were extremely retired. She would never go abroad until towards the dusk of the evening; and when she did, she always took the most sequestered routes; her favourite, indeed only resort on these occasions, being a certain little retired grove of elms, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile from Woodlands.

The extreme caution the young lady observed in all her movements when she went abroad, a good deal surprised both Henderson and his wife; but, from a feeling of delicacy towards their fair lodger, who had won their esteem by her affable and amiable manners, they avoided all remark on the subject, and would neither themselves interfere in any way with her proceedings, nor allow any other member of their family to do so.

Thus was she permitted to go out and return whenever she pleased, without inquiry or remark.

Although, however, neither Henderson nor his wife would allow of any one watching the motions of their fair but mysterious lodger when she went abroad, there is nothing to hinder us from doing this. We shall therefore follow her to the little elm grove by the wayside, on a certain evening two or three days after her arrival in Woodlands.

Doing this, we shall find the mysterious stranger seated beside a clear sparkling fountain, situated a little way within the grove, that, first forming itself into a little pellucid lake in the midst of the green-sward, afterwards glided away down a mossy channel bedecked with primroses.

All alone by this fountain sat the young lady, looking, in her surpassing features and the exquisite symmetry of her light and graceful form, the very nymph of the crystal waters of the spring—the goddess of the grove.

As she thus sat on the evening in question—it being now towards the dusk—the bushes, by which the fountain was in part shut in, were suddenly and roughly parted, and in the next moment a young man of elegant exterior, attired in the best fashion of the period, and leading a horse behind him by the bridle, stood before the half-alarmed and blushing damsel.

The embarrassment of the lady, however, was not much greater than that of the intruder, who appeared to have little expected to find so fair and delicate a creature in such a situation, or indeed to find any one else. He himself had sought the fountain, which he knew well, and had often visited, merely to quench his thirst.

After contemplating each other for an instant with looks of surprise and embarrassment, the stranger doffed his bonnet with an air of great gallantry, and apologised for his intrusion.

The lady, smiling and blushing, replied, that his appearance there could be no intrusion, as the place was free to all.

“True, madam,” said the former, again bowing low; “but your presence should have made it sacred, and I should have so deemed it, had I been aware of your being here.”

The only reply of the young lady to this gallant speech, was a profound curtesy, and a smile of winning sweetness which was natural to her.

Unable to withdraw himself from the fascinations of the fair stranger, yet without any apology for remaining longer where he was, the young man appeared for a moment not to know precisely what he should say or do next. At length, however, after having vainly hinted a desire to know the young lady's name and place of residence, his courtesy prevailed over every other more selfish feeling, and he mounted his horse, and, bidding the fair wood-nymph a respectful adieu, rode off.

The young gallant, however, did not carry all away with him that he brought,—he left his heart behind him; and he had not ridden far before he found that he had done so.

The surpassing beauty of the fair stranger, and the captivating sweetness of her manner, had made an impression upon him which was destined never to be effaced.

His, in short, was one of those cases in the matter of love, which, it is said, are laughed at in France, doubted in England, and true only of the warm-tempered sons and daughters of the sunny south,—love at first sight.

It was so. From that hour the image of the lovely nymph of the grove was to remain for ever enshrined in the inmost heart of the young cavalier.

He had met with no encouragement to follow up the accidental acquaintance he had made. Indeed, the lady's reluctance to give him any information whatever as to her name or residence, he could not but consider as an indirect intimation that she desired no further correspondence with him.

But, recollecting the old adage, that "faint heart never won fair lady," he resolved, although unbidden, to seek, very soon again, the fountain in the elm grove.

Having brought our story to this point, we shall retrace our steps a little way, and take note of certain incidents that occurred in the city of Glasgow on the day after the visit of him of the black charger at Woodlands.

Early on the forenoon of that day, the Drygate, then one of the principal streets of the city above named, exhibited an unusual degree of stir and bustle.

The causeway was thronged with idlers, who were ever and anon dashed aside, like the wave that is thrown from the prow of a vessel, by some prancing horseman, who made his way towards an open space formed by the junction of three different streets.

At this point were mustering a band of riders, consisting of the civil authorities of the city, together with a number of its principal inhabitants, and other gentlemen from the neighbourhood.

The horsemen were all attired in their best,—hat and feathers, long cloaks of Flemish broad-cloth, and glittering steel-handed rapiers by their sides.

Having mustered to about the number of thirty, they formed themselves into something like regular order, and seemed now to be but awaiting the word to march. And it was indeed so; but they were also awaiting he who was to give it. They waited the appearance of their leader. A shout from the populace soon after announced his approach.

"The Provost! the Provost!" exclaimed a hundred voices at once, as a man of large stature, and of a bold and martial bearing, mounted on a "coal-black steed," came prancing alongst the Drygate-head, and made for the point at which the horsemen were assembled.

On his approach, the latter doffed their hats respectfully—a civility which was gracefully returned by him to whom it was addressed.

Taking his place at the head of the cavalcade, the Provost gave the word to march, when the whole party moved onwards; and after cautiously footing it down the steep and ill-paved descent of the Drygate, took, at a slow pace, the road towards Hamilton.

The chief magistrate of Glasgow, who led the party of horsemen on the present occasion, was Sir Robert Lindsay of Dunrod,—a powerful and wealthy baron of the neighbourhood, who had been chosen to that appointment, as all chief magistrates were chosen in those wild and turbulent times, on account of his ability to protect the inhabitants from those insults and injuries to which they were constantly liable at the hands of unprincipled power, and from which the laws were too feeble to shield them.

And to better hands than those of Sir Robert Lindsay, who was a man of bold and determined character, the welfare of the city and the safety of the citizens could not have been entrusted.

In return for the honour conferred on him, and the confidence reposed in him, he watched over the interests of the city with the utmost vigilance. But it was not to the general interest alone that he confined the benefits of his guardianship. Individuals, also, who were wronged, or threatened to be wronged, found in him a ready and efficient protector, let the oppressor or wrongdoer be whom he might.

Having given this brief sketch of the leader of the cavalcade, we resume the detail of its proceedings.

Holding on its way in a south-easterly direction, the party soon reached and passed Rutherglen Bridge; the road connecting Hamilton with Glasgow being then on

the south side of the Clyde. But a little way farther had they proceeded, when the faint sound of a bugle was heard, coming apparently from a considerable distance.

"There he comes at last," said Sir David Lindsay, suddenly checking his horse to await the coming up of his party, of which he had been riding a little way in advance, immersed in a brown study. "There he comes at last," he exclaimed, recalled from his reverie by the sound of the bugle. "Look to your paces, gentlemen, and let us show some order and regularity as well as respect."

Obeying this hint, the horsemen, who had been before jogging along in a confused and careless manner, now drew together into a closer body; the laggards coming forward, and those in advance holding back.

In this order, with the Provost at their head, the party continued to move slowly onwards; but they had not done so for many minutes, when they descried, at the farther extremity of a long level reach of the road, a numerous party of horse approaching at a rapid, ambling pace, and seemingly straining hard to keep up with one who rode a little way in their front.

The contrast between this party and the Provost's was striking enough.

The latter, though exceedingly respectable and citizen-like, was of extremely sober hue compared to the former, in which flaunted all the gayest dresses of the gayest courtiers of the time. Long plumes of feathers waved and nodded in velvet bonnets, looped with gold bands; and rich and brilliant colours, mingling with the glitter of steel and silver, gave to the gallant cavalcade at once an imposing and magnificent appearance. In point of horsemanship, too, with the exception of Sir Robert Lindsay himself, and one or two other men

of rank who had joined his party, the approaching cavaliers greatly surpassed the worthy citizens of St. Mungo,—coming on at a showy and dashing pace, while the latter kept advancing with the sober, steady gait assimilative of their character.

On the two parties coming within about fifty paces of each other, Sir Robert Lindsay made a signal to his followers to halt, while he himself rode forward, hat in hand, towards the leader of the opposite party.

“Our good Sir Robert of Dunrod,” said the latter, who was no other than James v., advancing half-way to meet the Provost, and taking him kindly and familiarly by the hand as he spoke. “How did’st learn of our coming?”

“The movements of kings are not easily kept secret,” replied Sir Robert, evasively.

“By St. Bridget, it would seem not,” replied James, laughingly. “My visit to your good city, Sir Robert, I did not mean to be a formal one, and therefore had mentioned it only to one or two. In truth, I—I”—added James, with some embarrassment of manner—“I had just one particular purpose, and that of a private nature, in view. No state matter at all, Sir Robert—nothing of a public character. So that, to be plain with you, Sir Robert, I could have dispensed with the honour you have done me in bringing out these good citizens to receive me; that being, I presume, your purpose. Not but that I should have been most happy to meet yourself, Sir Robert; but it was quite unnecessary to trouble these worthy people.”

“It was our bounden duty, your Grace,” replied Sir Robert, not at all disconcerted by this royal damper on his loyalty. “It was our bounden duty, on learning that your Grace was at Bothwell Castle, and that you intended visiting our poor town of Glasgow, to acknow-

ledge the favour in the best way in our power. And these worthy gentlemen and myself could think of no better than coming out to meet and welcome your Grace."

"Well, well, since it is so, Sir Robert," replied the king, good-humouredly, "we shall take the kindness as it is meant. Let us proceed."

Riding side by side, and followed by their respective parties, James and the Provost now resumed their progress towards Glasgow, where they shortly after arrived, and where they were received with noisy acclamations by the populace, whom rumour had informed of the king's approach.

On reaching the city, the latter proceeded to the Bishop's Castle,—an edifice which has long since disappeared, but which at this time stood on or near the site of the infirmary,—in which he intended taking up his residence.

Having seen the king within the castle gates, his citizen escort dispersed, and sought their several homes; going off, in twos and threes, in different directions.

"Ken ye, Sir Robert, what has brought his Grace here at present?" said an old wealthy merchant, who had been one of the cavalcade that went to meet James, and whom the Provost overtook as he was leisurely jogging down the High Street, on his way home.

"Hem," ejaculated Sir Robert. "Perhaps I have half a guess, Mr. Morton. The king visits places on very particular sorts of errands sometimes. His Grace didn't above half thank us for our attendance to-day. He would rather have got somewhat more quietly into the city; but I had reasons for desiring it to be otherwise, so did not mind his hints about his wish for privacy."

"And no doubt he had his reasons for the privacy he hinted at," said Sir Robert's companion.

"You may swear that," replied the latter, laughingly.

"Heard ye ever, Mr. Morton, of a certain fair and wealthy young lady of the name of Jessie Craig?"

"John Craig's daughter?" rejoined the old merchant.

"The same," said Sir Robert. "The prettiest girl in Scotland, and one of the wealthiest too."

"Well; what if the king should have been smitten with her beauty, having seen her accidentally in Edinburgh, where she was lately? and what, if his visit to Glasgow just now should be for the express purpose of seeing this fair maiden? and what, if I should not exactly approve of such a proceeding, seeing that the young lady in question has, as you know, neither father nor mother to protect her, both being dead?"

"Well, Sir Robert, and what then?" here interposed Mr. Morton, availing himself of a pause in the former's supposititious case.

"Why, then, wouldn't it be my bounden duty, worthy sir, as Provost of this city, to act the part of guardian towards this young maiden in such emergency, and to see that she came by no wrong?"

"Truly, it would be a worthy part, Sir Robert," replied the old merchant; "but the king is strong, and you may not resist him openly."

"Nay, that I would not attempt," replied the Provost. "I have taken quieter and more effectual measures. Made aware, though somewhat late, through a trusty channel, of the king's intended visit and its purpose, I have removed her out of the reach of danger, to where his Grace will, I rather think, have some difficulty in finding her."

"So, so. And this, then, is the true secret of the honour which has just been conferred on us!" replied Sir Robert's companion, with some indignation. "But the matter is in good hands when it is in yours, Provost.

In your keeping we consider our honours and our interests are safe. I wish you a good day, Provost." And the interlocutors having by this time arrived at the foot of the High Street, where four streets joined, the old merchant took that which conducted to his residence, Sir Robert's route lying in an opposite direction.

From the conversation just recorded, the reader will at once trace a connection between Sir Robert Lindsay of Dunrod and he of the black charger who brought to Woodlands the fair damsel whom we left there. They were the same; and that fair damsel was the daughter of John Craig, late merchant of the city of Glasgow, who left an immense fortune, of which this girl was the sole heir.

In carrying the young lady to Woodlands, and leaving her there, Sir Robert, although apparently under the compulsion of circumstances, was acting advisedly. He knew Henderson to be a man of excellent character and great respectability; and in the secrecy and mystery he observed, he sought to preclude all possibility of his interference in the affair ever reaching the ears of the king. What he had told to old Morton, he knew would go no further; that person having been an intimate friend of the young lady's father, and of course interested in all that concerned her welfare.

The palace of a bishop was not very appropriate quarters for one who came on such an errand as that which brought James to Glasgow. But this was a circumstance that did not give much concern to that merry and somewhat eccentric monarch; and the less so, that the bishop himself happened to be from home at the time, on a visit to his brother of St. Andrews.

Having the house thus to himself, James did not hesitate to make as free use of it as if he had been at Holyrood.

It was not many hours after his arrival at the castle, that he summoned to his presence a certain trusty attendant of the name of William Buchanan, and thus schooled him in the duties of a particular mission in which he desired his services.

“Willie,” said the good-humoured monarch, “at the further end of the Rottenrow of this good city of Glasgow—that is, at the western end of the said row—there stands a fair mansion on the edge of the brae, and overlooking the strath of the Clyde. It is the residence of a certain fair young lady of the name of Craig. Now, Willie, what I desire of you to do is this: you will go to this young lady from me, carrying her this gold ring, and say to her that I intend, with her permission, doing myself the honour of paying her a visit in the course of this afternoon.

“Make your observations, Willie, and let me know how the land lies when you return. But, pray thee, keep out of the way of our worthy knight of Dunrod; and if thou shouldst chance to meet him, and he should question thee, seeing that you wear our livery, breathe no syllable of what thou art about, otherwise he may prove somewhat troublesome to both of us. At any rate, to a certainty, he would crop thy ears, Willie; and thou knowest, king though I be, I could not put them on again, nor give thee another pair in their stead. So keep those thou hast out of the hands of Sir Robert Lindsay of Dunrod, I pray thee.”

Charged with his mission, Willie, who had been often employed on matters of this kind before, proceeded to the street with the unsavoury name already mentioned; but, not knowing exactly where to find the house he wanted, he looked around him to see if he could see any one to whom he might apply for information. There happened to be nobody on the street at the time;

but his eye at length fell on an old weaver—as, from the short green apron he wore, he appeared to be—standing at a door.

Towards this person Willie now advanced, discarding, however, as much as possible, all appearance of having any particular object in view; for he prided himself on the caution and dexterity with which he managed all such matters as that he was now engaged in.

“Fine day, honest man,” said Willie, approaching the old weaver. “Gran wather for the hairst.”

“It’s just that, noo,” replied the old man, gazing at Willie with a look of inquiry. “Just uncommon pleasant wather.”

“A bit nice airy place up here,” remarked the latter.

“Ou ay, weel aneuch for that,” replied the weaver.

“But air ’ll no fill the wame.”

“No very substantially,” said Willie. “Some gran hooses up here, though. Wha’s is that?” and he pointed to a very handsome mansion-house opposite.

“That’s the rector o’ Hamilton’s,” replied the weaver.

“And that ane there?”

“That’s the rector o’ Carstairs’.”

“And that?”

“That’s the rector o’ Erskine’s.”

“’Od, but ye do leeve in a godly neighbourhood here,” said Willie, impatient with these clerical iterations. “Do a’ the best houses hereawa belang to the clergy?”

“Indeed, the maist feck o’ them,” said the weaver. “Leave ye them alane for that. The best o’ everything fa’s to their share.”

“Yonder’s anither handsome hoose, noo,” said Willie, pointing to one he had not yet indicated. “Does yon belang to the clergy too?”

“Ou no; yon’s the late Mr. Craig’s,” replied the

weaver; "ane o' oor walthiest merchants, wha died some time ago."

"Ou ay," said Willie, drily; "just sae. Gude mornin', friend." And thinking he had managed his inquiries very dexterously, he sauntered slowly away—still assuming to have no special object in view—towards the particular house just spoken of, and which, we need not say, was precisely the one he wanted.

It was a large isolated building, with an extensive garden behind, and stretching down the face of what is now called the Deanside Brae. On the side next the street, the entrance was by a tall, narrow, iron gate. This gate Willie now approached, but found it locked hard and fast. Finding this, he bawled out, at the top of his voice, for some one to come to him. After a time, an old woman made her appearance, and, in no very pleasant mood, asked him what he wanted.

"I hae a particular message, frae a very particular person, to the young leddy o' this hoose," replied Willie.

"Ye maun gang and seek the young leddy o' this hoose ither whars than here, then," said the old dame, making back to the house again, without intending any further communication on the subject.

"Do ye mean to say that she's no in the hoose?" shouted Willie.

"Ay, I mean to say that, and mair too," replied the old crone. "She hasna been in't for a gey while, and winna be in't for a guid while langer; and sae ye may tell them that sent ye."

Saying this, she passed into the house; and by doing so, would have put an end to all further conference.

But Willie was not to be thus baffled in his object. Changing his tactics from the imperative to the wheedling, in which last he believed himself to be exceedingly dexterous—

"Mistress—I say, Mistress," he shouted, in a loud, but coaxing tone; "speak a word, woman—just a word or two. Ye maybe winna fare the waur o't."

Whether it was the hint conveyed in the last clause of Willie's address, or that the old woman felt some curiosity to hear what so urgent a visitor had to say, she returned to the door, where, standing fast, and looking across the courtyard at Willie, whose sly though simple-looking face was pressed against the iron bars of the outer gate, she replied to him with a—

"Weel, man, what is't ye want?"

"Tuts, woman, come across—come across," said Willie, wagging her towards him with his forefinger. "I canna be roarin' out what I hae to say to ye a' that distance. I micht as weel cry it oot at the cross. See, there's something to bring ye a wee nearer."

And he held out several small silver coin through the bars of the gate. The production of the cash had the desired effect. The old woman, who was lame, and who walked by the aid of a short thick stick with a crooked head, hobbled towards him, and, having accepted the proffered coin, again asked, though with much more civility than before, what it was he wanted?

"Tuts, woman, open the yett," said Willie in his cagiest manner, "and I'll tell ye a' aboot it. It's hardly ceevil to be keeping a body speakin' this way wi' his nose thrust through atwixt twa cauld bars o' airn, like a rattin atween a pair o' tangs."

"Some folks are safest that way, though," replied the old woman, with something like an attempt at a laugh. "Bars o' airn are amang the best freens we hae sometimes. But as ye seem a civil sort o' a chiel, after a', I'll let ye in, although I dinna see what ye'll be the better o' that."

So saying, she took a large iron key from her girdle, inserted it in the lock, and in the next moment the gate grated on its hinges; yielding partly to the pressure of Willie from without, and partly to the co-operative efforts of the old woman from within.

"Noo," said Willie, on gaining the interior of the courtyard—"Noo," he said, affecting his most coaxing manner, "you and me 'll hae a bit crack thegither, guidwife."

And, sitting down on a stone bench that ran along the front of the house, he motioned to the old lady to take a seat beside him, which she did.

"I understand, guidwife," began Willie, who meant to be very cunning in his mode of procedure, "that she's just an uncommon bonny leddy your mistress; just wonderfu'."

"Whaever tell't ye that, didna misinform ye," replied the old woman drily.

"And has mints o' siller?" rejoined Mr. Buchanan.

"No ill aff in that way either," said the old woman.

"But it's her beauty—it's her extraordinar beauty—that's the wonder, and that I hear everybody speakin' aboot," said Willie. "I wad gie the price o' sax fat hens to see her. Could ye no get me a glisk o' her ony way, just for ae minute?"

"Didna I tell ye before that she's no at hame?" said the old dame, threatening again to get restive on Willie's hands.

"Od, so ye did; I forgot," said Mr. Buchanan, affecting obliviousness of the fact. "Whaur may she be noo?" he added in his simplest and *couthiest* manner.

"Wad ye like to ken?" replied the old lady with a satirical sneer.

"Deed wad I; and there's mae than me wad like to

ken," replied Willie; "and them that wad pay handsomely for the information."

"Really," said the old dame, with a continuation of the same sneer, and long ere this guessing what Willie was driving at. "And wha may they be noo, if I may speer?"

"They're gey kenspeckled," replied Mr. Buchanan; "but that doesna matter. If ye canna, or winna tell me whaur Mistress Craig is, could ye no gie's a bit inklin' o' whan ye expect her hame?"

"No; but I'll gie ye a bit inklin o' whan ye'll walk oot o' this," said the old woman, rising angrily from her seat; "and that's this minute, or I'll set the dug on ye. Hisk, hisk—Teeger, Teeger!"

And a huge black dog came bouncing out of the house, and took up a position right in front of Willie; wagging his tail, as if in anticipation of a handsome treat in the way of worrying that worthy.

"Gude sake, woman," said Willie, rising in great alarm from his seat, and edging towards the outer gate—"What's a' this for? Ye wadna set that brute on a Christian cratur, wad ye?"

"Wadna I? Ye'd better no try me, frien', but troop aff wi' ye. Teeger," she added, with a significant look. The dog understood it, and, springing on Willie, seized him by one of the skirts of his coat, which, with one powerful tug, he at once separated from the body.

Pressed closely upon by both the dog and his mistress, Willie keeping, however, his face to the foe, now retreated towards the gate, when, just at the moment of his making his exit, the old lady, raising her staff, hit him a parting blow, which, taking effect on the bridge of his nose, immediately enlarged the dimensions of that organ, besides drawing forth a copious stream of claret. In the next instant the gate was shut and locked in the sufferer's face.

"Confound ye, ye auld limmer," shouted Willie furiously, and shaking his fist through the bars of the gate as he spoke, "if I had ye here on the outside o' the yett, as ye're in the in, if I wadna baste the auld hide o' ye. But my name's no Willie Buchanan if I dinna gar ye rue this job yet, some way or anither."

To these objurgations of the discomfited messenger the old lady deigned no word of answer, but merely shaking her head, and indulging in a pretty broad smile of satisfaction, hobbled into the house, followed by Tiger, wagging his tail, as much as to say, "I think we've given yon fellow a fright, mistress."

Distracted with indignation and resentment, Willie hastened back to the castle, and, too much excited to think of his outward appearance, hurried into the royal presence with his skirtless coat and disfigured countenance, which he had by no means improved by sundry wipes with the sleeve of his coat.

On Willie making his appearance in this guise, the merry monarch looked at him for an instant in silent amazement, then burst into an incontrollable fit of laughter, which the grave, serious look of Willie showed he by no means relished. There was even a slight expression of resentment in the manner in which the maltreated messenger bore the merry reception of his light-hearted master.

"Willie, man," at length said James, when his mirth had somewhat subsided, "what's this has happened thee? Where gottest thou that enormous nose, man?"

"Feth, your Majesty, it may be a joke to you, but it's unco little o' ane to me," replied Willie, whose confidential duties and familiar intercourse with his royal master had led him to assume a freedom of speech which was permitted to no other, and which no other would have dared to attempt.

"I hae gotten sic a worryin' the day," he continued, "as I never got in my life before. Between dugs and auld wives, I hae had a bonny time o't. Worried by the tane and smashed by the tither, as my nose and my coat-tails bear witness."

"Explain yourself, Willie. What does all this mean?" exclaimed James, again laughing.

Willie told his story, finishing with the information that the bird was flown—meaning Jessie Craig. "Aff and awa, naebody kens, or'll tell whaur."

"Off—away!" exclaimed the king, with an air of mingled disappointment and surprise. "Very odd," he added, musingly; "and most particularly unlucky. But we shall wait on a day or two, and she will probably reappear in that time; or we may find out where she has gone to."

On the day following that on which the incidents just related occurred, the curiosity of the good people in the neighbourhood of the late Mr. Craig's house in Rottenrow was a good deal excited by seeing a person in the dress of a gentleman hovering about the residence just alluded to.

Anon he would walk to and fro in front of the house, looking earnestly towards the windows. Now he would descend the Deanside Brae, and do the same by those behind. Again he would return to the front of the mansion, and taking up his station on the opposite side of the street, would resume his scrutiny of the windows.

The stranger was thus employed, when he was startled by the appearance of some one advancing towards him, whom, it was evident, he would fain have avoided if he could. But it was too late. There was no escape. So, assuming an air of as much composure and indifference as he could, he awaited the approach of the unwelcome intruder. This person was Sir Robert Lindsay.

Coming up to the stranger with a respectful air, and with an expression of countenance as free from all consciousness as that which had been assumed by the former—

“I hope your Grace is well?” he said, bowing profoundly as he spoke.

“Thank you, Provost—thank you,” replied James; for we need hardly say it was he.

“Your Grace has doubtless come hither,” said the former gravely, “to enjoy the delightful view which this eminence commands?”

“The precise purpose, Sir Robert,” replied James, recovering a little from the embarrassment which, after all his efforts, he could not entirely conceal. “The view is truly a fine one, Provost,” continued the king. “I had no idea that your good city could boast of anything so fair in the way of landscape. Our city of Edinburgh hath more romantic points about it; but for calm and tranquil beauty, methinks it hath nothing superior to the scene commanded by this eminence.”

“There are some particular localities on the ridge of the hill here, however,” said Sir Robert, “that exhibit the landscape to much better advantage than others, and to which, taking it for granted that your Grace is not over-familiar with the ground, it will afford me much pleasure to conduct you.”

“Ah! thank you, good Sir Robert—thank you,” replied James. “But some other day, if you please. The little spare time I had on my hands is about exhausted, so that I must return to the castle. I have, as you know, Sir Robert, to give audience to some of your worthy councillors, who intend honouring me with a visit.

“Amongst the number I will expect to see yourself,

Sir Robert." And James, after politely returning the loyal obeisance of the Provost, hurried away towards the castle.

On his departure, the latter stood for a moment, and looked after him with a smile of peculiar intelligence; then muttered, as he also left the spot—

"Well do I know what it was brought your Grace to this quarter of the town; and knowing this, I know it was for anything but the sake of its view. Fair maidens have more attractions in your eyes than all the views between this and John o'Groat's. But I have taken care that your pursuit in the present instance will avail thee little." And the good Provost went on his way.

For eight entire days after this did James wait in Glasgow for the return of Jessie Craig; but he waited in vain. Neither in that time could he learn anything whatever of the place of her sojournment. His patience at length exhausted, he determined on giving up the pursuit for the time at any rate, and on quitting the city.

The king, as elsewhere casually mentioned, had come last from Bothwell Castle. It was now his intention to proceed to Stirling, where he proposed stopping for two or three weeks; thence to Linlithgow, and thereafter returning to Edinburgh.

The purpose of James to make this round having reached the ears of a certain Sir James Crawford of Netherton, whose house and estate lay about half-way between Glasgow and Stirling, that gentleman sent a respectful message to James, through Sir Robert Lindsay, to the effect that he would feel much gratified if his Grace would deign to honour his poor house of Netherton with a visit in passing, and accept for himself and followers such refreshment as he could put before them.

To this message James returned a gracious answer, saying that he would have much pleasure in accepting the invitation so kindly sent him, and naming the day and hour when he would put the inviter's hospitality to the test.

Faithful to his promise, the king and his retinue, amongst whom was now Sir Robert Lindsay, who had been included in the invitation, presented themselves at Netherton gate about noon on the day that had been named.

They were received with all honour by the proprietor, a young man of prepossessing appearance, graceful manners, and frank address.

On the king and gentlemen of his train entering the house, they were ushered into a large banqueting hall, where was an ample table spread with the choicest edibles, and glittering with the silver goblets and flagons that stood around it in thick array. Everything, in short, betokened at once the loyalty and great wealth of the royal party's entertainer.

The king and his followers having taken their places at table, the fullest measure of justice was quickly done to the good things with which it was spread. James was in high spirits, and talked and rattled away with as much glee and as entire an absence of all kingly reserve as the humblest good fellow in his train.

Encouraged by the affability of the king, and catching his humour, the whole party gave way to the most unrestrained mirth. The joke and the jest went merrily round with the wine flagon; and he was for a time the best man who could start the most jocund theme.

It was while this spirit prevailed that Sir Robert Lindsay, after making a private signal to Sir James Crawford, which had the effect of causing him to quit

the apartment on pretence of looking for something he wanted, addressing the king, said—

“May I take the liberty of asking your Grace if you have seen any particularly fair maidens in the course of your present peregrinations? I know your Grace has a good taste in these matters.”

James coloured a little at this question and the remark which accompanied it; but quickly regaining his self-possession and good-humour—

“No, Sir Robert,” he said, laughingly, “I cannot say that I have been so fortunate on the present occasion. As to the commendation which you have been pleased to bestow on my taste, I thank you, and am glad it meets with your approbation.”

“Yet, your Grace,” continued Sir Robert, “excellent judge as I know you to be of female beauty, I deem myself, old and staid as I am, your Grace’s equal, craving your Grace’s pardon; and, to prove this, will take a bet with your Grace of a good round sum, that you have never seen, and do not know, a more beautiful woman than the lady of our present host.”

“Take care, Provost,” replied James. “Make no rash bets. I know the most beautiful maiden the sun ever shone upon. But it would be ungallant and ungracious to make the lady of our good host the subject of such a bet on the present occasion.”

“But our host is absent, your Grace,” replied the Provost pertinaciously; “and neither he nor any one else, but your Grace’s friends present, need know anything at all of the matter. Will your Grace take me up for a thousand merks?”

“But suppose I should,” replied James, “how is the thing to be managed? and who is to decide?”

“Both points are of easy adjustment, your Grace,” said Sir Robert. “Your Grace has only to intimate a

wish to our host, when he returns, that you would feel gratified by his introducing his lady to you ; and as to the matter of decision, I would, with your Grace's permission and approval, put that into the hands of the gentlemen present. Of course, nothing need be said of the purpose of this proceeding to either host or hostess."

"Well, be it so," said James, urged on by the madcaps around him, who were delighted with the idea of the thing. "Now then, gentlemen," he continued, "the lady on whose beauty I stake my thousand merks is Jessie Craig, the merchant's daughter, of Glasgow, whom, I think, all of you have seen."

"Ha ! my townswoman," exclaimed Sir Robert, with every appearance of surprise. "On my word, you have made mine a hard task of it ; for a fairer maiden than Jessie Craig may not so readily be found. Nevertheless, I adhere to the terms of my bet."

The Provost had just done speaking, when Sir James Crawford entered the apartment, and resumed his seat at table. Shortly after he had done so, James, addressing him, said—

"Sir James, it would complete the satisfaction of these gentlemen and myself with the hospitality you have this day shown us, were you to afford us an opportunity of paying our respects to your good lady ; that is, if it be perfectly convenient for and agreeable to her."

"Lady Crawford will be but too proud of the honour, your Grace," replied Sir James, rising. "She shall attend your Grace presently."

Saying this, the latter again withdrew ; and soon after returned, leading a lady, over whose face hung a long and flowing veil, into the royal presence.

It would require the painter's art to express

adequately the looks of intense and eager interest with which James and his party gazed on the veiled beauty, as she entered the apartment and advanced towards them. Their keen and impatient scrutiny seemed as if it would pierce the tantalizing obstruction that prevented them seeing those features on whose beauty so large a sum had been staked. In this state of annoying suspense, however, they were not long detained. On approaching within a few paces of the king, and at the moment Sir James Crawford said, with a respectful obeisance, "My wife, Lady Crawford, your Grace," she raised her veil, and exhibited to the astonished monarch and his courtiers a surpassingly beautiful countenance indeed; but it was that of Jessie Craig.

"A trick! a trick!" exclaimed James, with merry shout, and amidst a peal of laughter from all present, and in which the fair cause of all this stir most cordially joined. "A trick, a trick, Provost! a trick!" repeated James.

"Nay, no trick at all, your Grace, craving your Grace's pardon," replied the Provost gravely. "Your Grace betted that Jessie Craig was more beautiful than Lady Crawford. Now, is it so? I refer the matter, as agreed upon, to the gentlemen around us."

"Lost! lost!" exclaimed half a dozen gallants at once.

"Well, well, gentlemen, since you so decide," said James, "I will instantly give our good Provost here an order upon our treasurer for the sum."

"Nay, your Grace, not so fast. The money is as safe in your hands as mine. Let it there remain till I require it. When I do, I shall not fail to demand it."

"Be it so, then," said James, when, placing his fair hostess beside him, and after obtaining a brief explana-

tion—which we will, in the sequel, give at more length—of the odd circumstance of finding Jessie Craig converted into Lady Crawford, the mirth and hilarity of the party were resumed, and continued till pretty far in the afternoon, when the king and his courtiers took horse,—the former at parting having presented his hostess with a massive gold chain which he wore about his neck, in token of his good wishes,—and rode off for Stirling.

To our tale we have now only to add the two or three explanatory circumstances above alluded to.

In Sir James Crawford the reader is requested to recognise the young man who discovered Jessie Craig, then the unknown fair one, by the side of the fountain in the little elm grove at Woodlands.

Encouraged by and acting on the adage already quoted,—namely, that “faint heart never won fair lady,”—he followed up his first accidental interview with the fair fugitive from royal importunity with an assiduity that in one short week accomplished the wooing and winning of her.

While the first was in progress, Sir James was informed by the young lady of the reasons for her concealment. On this and the part Sir Robert Lindsay had acted towards her being made known to him, he lost no time in opening a communication with that gentleman, riding repeatedly into Glasgow himself to see him on the subject of his fair charge; at the same time informing him of the attachment he had formed for her, and finally obtaining his consent, or at least approbation, to their marriage. The bet, we need hardly add, was a concerted joke between the Provost, Sir James, and his lady.

When we have added that the circumstance of Sir Robert Lindsay's delay in returning for Jessie Craig,

which excited so much surprise at Woodlands, was owing to the unlooked-for prolongation of the king's stay in Glasgow, we think we have left nothing unexplained that stood in need of such aid.

THE BRIDE OF BELL'S TOWER.

SOME time ago I made inquiry at the editor of *Notes and Queries* for information as to the whereabouts of an old mansion called Bell's Tower, and whether it was occupied by a family of the name of Bower; but my inquiry was not attended with any success beyond the usual production of surmises and speculations. There was a place so called in Perthshire; but then it never was occupied by people of that name,—the Bowers being an old family in Angus, whose principal messuage was Kincaldrum. Yet I cannot be mistaken in the name, either of the house or the family, as connected with the occurrences of the tradition, the essentials of which have floated in my mind ever since I heard them from one to whom they were also traditional. Then the story has something of an antique air about it, as may be noticed from the application of adjectives to baptismal names, as Devil Isobel and Sweet Marjory,—by no means a modern usage, but easily recognised in analogues of our old poetry. We may say, at least, that whether the Bowers were a very or only a moderately ancient family, Bell's Tower was an old structure—the name being applied to the mansion, which was an addition to a peel or castle-house of many centuries—not without its battlements and barn-kin, and all the other appurtenances of a strength, as such places were called.

Had we more to do than our subject requires with the *physique* of this mansion—and we have something ;

for what romance in the moral world is independent of a *locale*, and of those lights and shadows that play where men live and act all the wondrous things they do?—we might be particular in our description; but our narrator's shade will be sufficiently conciliated, if we say that there was room enough, and ill-lighted chambers enough, and sufficiently tortuous breakneck stairs here and there, as well as those peculiar to castles, lobbies in all conscience long enough—not forgetting a blue parlour with some mysterious associations—to supply elements for genius to weave the many-coloured web of fiction. But we have a humbler part to play; and it begins here,—that Mrs. Bower had in the said blue parlour, a fortnight before our incidents, told her eldest daughter, whom we are, for the sake of the antique nomenclature—discriminative, and therefore kindly, if also sometimes harsh—to call Sweet Marjory, a piece of information, to her unexpected and strange,—no other than that Isobel, her sister, was the accepting and accepted of the rich and chivalrous youth, Hector Ogilvy, a neighbouring laird's son. Nor would it have appeared wonderful, if we had known more of the inside of that heaving breast, wherein a heart was too obedient to those magic chords, with their minute capillaries spread over the tympanum, that Marjory was as mute and pale as a statue of marble. But the truth really was, that Ogilvy had courted Marjory, and won her heart, and Isobel—Devil Isobel—had contrived means to win him to herself, at the expense of a sister's reputation for all the beautiful qualities that adorn human nature. And as all the world knows that both men and women hate those they injure, we may be at no loss to ascertain the feelings by which Isobel regarded Marjory. Nor shall those who know the nature of woman have

any difficulty in supposing that not more carefully does nature guard in the bosom the physical organ of the affections, than she concealed the feelings which had for that fortnight eaten into the vital tissues of her being.

How swiftly that fortnight had flown for Isobel! how charged with heavy hours for Marjory! and to-morrow was the eventful day. What doings in Bell's Tower during this intervening time! what pattering of feet along the sombre lobbies! what gossiping among servants! what applications to the gate—comings and goings! and the rooms, how bestrewn with clippings of silk, and stray bits of artificial flowers! And, amidst all the triumphing, Isobel displayed her nature in spite of old saws and maxims, which lay upon brides conditions of reserve and humility, held to be so becoming in those who, as it were, occupy the place of a sacrifice; yea, if some tears are shed, so much better is custom obeyed. Then where could Marjory go, in the midst of this confusion of gaiety?—where, as the poet says, “weep her woes” in secret, and listen to the throbbings of a broken heart? Not in her own room, in the lower part of the castle tower, where her mother had still the privilege of chiding her for throwing the shadows of melancholy over a scene of happiness, and where Isobel would force an entrance, to show her, in the very spite of her evil nature, some bridal present from him who was still to the deserted one the idol of her heart. There was scarcely a refuge for grief, where joy was impatient of check, and, like all tyrants, would force reluctant conditions into a unanimity of compliance; but up these bastle stairs, in the second room, there was one whom time had shut out from the sympathies of the world, so old, as to be almost forgotten, except by Marjory herself, who, all gentleness

and love, delighted to supply vacant hearts with the fervours of her friendship, and to ameliorate evils by the appliances of her humanity.

With languid step she ascended the stair, and was presently beside her great-grandaunt, Patricia Bower. Twilight was dropping her wing, and the shadows were fast collecting round the square windows, which, narrow and grated, would scarcely at noonday let in light enough to enliven the human eye. There, solitary and in the gloom, sat the creature of the prior century, whose birth could only be arrived at by going through generations back ninety and five years before ; but not gloom to her, to whom the light of memory was as a necromancer, arraying before the gleg eye of her spirit the images of persons and things and circumstances of the far past, with all the vividness of enchantment, and still even raising again those very loves and sympathies they elicited when they were of the passing hour. Yet the doings in this house of Bell's Tower at the time, so far removed from the period of the living archetypes of her dreams, had got to her ear, where still the word marriage was a charm, against which the dry impassable nerve resisted in vain.

"I will go to this marriage, Marjory," she said, as the maiden entered, and without appearing to notice her distress.

"No, aunt," replied Marjory, as she sat down opposite to her.

"And shall I not?" continued the ancient maiden, as her eyes seemed to come forward out of the deep sockets into which they had long sunk, and emitted an unearthly lustre. "And shall I not? It is four times a score of years bating five since I was at a bridal ; and when all were waiting, ay, Marjory, expecting the young bridegroom, the door was opened, and four men

carried in Walter Ogilvy's bleeding corpse, and laid him in the bridal hall ; for he had been stabbed by a rival in the Craig Glen, down by there ; and where could they take the body but to Bell's Tower, where his bride waited for him ? But she did not go mad, Sweet Marjory ; no, no."

And as the image grew more distinct in the internal chambers, so did the eyes shine more lustrously, like stars peering through between grey clouds ; and the shrivelled muscles, obeying once more the excited nerve, imparted to her almost the appearance of youth. Gradually a humming tone essayed to take form in words ; but the wavering treble disconcerted her, till, calming herself by some effort, she recited, in solemn see-saw—

"The guests they came from the grey mountain side,—
The bride she was fair, and the bride she was fain ;
But where was the lover, who sought not his bride ?
Oh ! a maid she is now, as a maid she was then ;
And her cheek it is pale, and her hair it is grey,
Since the long long time of her bridal day."

The last line descended into a quavering whisper.

With the effusion, adopted probably from an old ditty, and brought forth from its long-retaining chamber of the brain by the inspiration of one of her often-returning visions, the fervour of the tasked spirit died away, and, reclining her head, she sat before the wondering Marjory—who had heard, as a tale of the family, and applicable to Patricia herself, the circumstances she had related—as one suspended between death and life ; nor did it seem that it required more than a rude vibration to decide to which of the two worlds she would in a few minutes belong. Only a short time sufficed to restore her to her ordinary composure, and, waving her shrivelled hand, she said—

"Open the door to the bartisan, Marjory, that I may have air, and see the moon, who, amidst all the changes of life, is ever the same to the miserable and the happy."

Marjory obeyed her; and as she looked forth, the moon was rising over the tops of the trees, as if to chase away the envious shades, ready to follow the departure of twilight. There was solace in her soft splendour for the melancholy of the youthful girl, which might be ameliorated by a turn of fortune, as well as for the sadness of her aged friend, which was not only beyond the influence of worldly change, but so like the forecast gloom of the grave, as if the inexorable tyrant, long disappointed, was already rejoicing in his victim. But no sooner was the door casement opened, than the sound of voices entered. Then Marjory stepped out on the bartisan, not to listen, for her spirit was superior to artifice; and, leaning over the bartisan, she soon recognised the voices of Isobel and Ogilvy; nor could she escape the words—

"I loved her for her own sake," said he, "before I loved you, Isobel; and now I love her as your sister. But I shall have no peace in my wedded life with you, save on the condition that you love her also; for my conscience tells me I have not done by Sweet Marjory what is deemed according to the honour of man. You see what your power has been, Isobel. Nor would I have spoken thus on the very evening before our wedding, were it not that I have heard you do not love her, nay, that you hate her."

Then Marjory heard Devil Isobel reply; and she knew by the voice that she was in anger, though she cunningly repressed her passion.

"Believe them not," said Isobel. "By the pale face of yonder moon, and all those bright stars that are coming out one by one to add honour upon honour to

this evening, the last of my maiden life, I love sweet Marjory Bower; and I swear by Him who made all these heavenly orbs, that I shall love her as a sister ought."

"It pleases me much to hear my Isobel speak thus," said Ogilvy. "And hark ye, love, I have here a valuable locket, set with diamonds and opals—see, it contains the grey hair of my mother; and, will I or nill I, she will send this by me to Marjory as a love-token. Now I want to convey it to Sweet Marjory through you, because it will make you a party to the love-gift, and so bind us all in a circle of affection."

"Give it me," cried Isobel, fixing her piercing eye on the diamonds as they sparkled in the moonlight; "and, on the honour of a bride, I will give it to my sister, whom I love so dearly."

And Isobel continued to speak; but the movement of the lovers as they walked prevented Marjory from hearing more. Still she followed them with her weeping eyes, as their figures, clearly revealed to her by the moon, glided among the wide-standing trees of the lawn, and at length disappeared. The moon had now less solace for her. Her wound had been retouched by a hand of all others calculated to irritate, even by that of Ogilvy himself, who, she now knew, felt compunction for the cruelty of his desertion. His regret was too late to save her sorrow, but it was not too late to increase that sorrow; for the words by which he had uttered it reminded her, in their tone, of that unctuous luxury he had so often poured into her heart, and which, in their sincerity, were so unlike the dissimulation of her wicked sister. With a deep-drawn sigh she entered the bartisan casement, shut it after her, and having spoken some kindly words to her aunt, whom she kissed, she sought her way down the

bastle stair to her own room below. There she threw herself upon a couch, not to seek assuagement, but only to give rest to limbs that would scarcely support her. Nor did the closed door keep from her ear those notes of preparation, coming in so many shapes ; for there was, in addition to the customary rites of the great sacrifice, to be a sumptuous feast, at which, too, she would be expected to attend. Yet all these noisy tokens did not keep from her mind the tones of that remorse she had heard from the lips of Ogilvy, and she fondled them, in her misery, as one would the dead body of a dear friend on whose face still sat the look of love in which he died. By-and-by she heard once more the voice of Isobel, who had returned ; and she trembled as she expected the visit in execution of her commission. The door opened, and there entered her sister, with a face, as it appeared in the light of the lamp she carried, beaming with the old exultation, mingled with the smile of a soft deceit.

“Look here, Sweet Marjory,” she said, as she held out the golden trinket. “Saw you ever so lovely a piece of workmanship ? But you cannot discern its value till you know it contains a lock of the hair of *my* mother-in-law-to-be—Mrs. Ogilvy. That locket was given to me even now by my Hector, the bridegroom——”

“To give to me,” sighed Marjory faintly.

“You lie for a false fiend,” cried Devil Isobel. “He gave it to me, and to me it belongs.”

“You may keep it,” said Marjory ; “but I heard Hector Ogilvy say to you that it was a gift from his mother to me, and you promised to him to deliver it.”

Isobel’s lips turned white and whiter, as her eye flared with the internal light struck out of the quivering nerve by the brain inflamed by fury. Nor was it

the detection alone that produced these effects: she had construed Ogilvy's confession that he once loved Marjory into an admission that the latter was still dear to him, and she considered herself justified in her suspicion by the tones of his regret; then there had shot through her the pang of envy, when she heard that there was a gift for Marjory from the mother, and none to her. All these pent-up passions had been quickened into expression by Marjory's gentle detection; and as Marjory looked at her, she trembled.

"Do not be angry at me, Isobel," she said. "I did not go out upon the bartisan to hear you; and as for the gift, I do not want it."

But Marjory's simplicity and generosity, in place of appeasing her passion, only gave it a turn into a forced stifling, which suited the purpose of her dissimulation. In an instant the evil features, which, as a moral expression, had changed her into hideousness, gave way, and she stood before her sister the beautiful being who had enchanted Ogilvy out of his first and purest love.

"Come, Marjory," she said, as she grasped the faint hand of the almost unresisting girl. "Come."

And leading her by a half-dragging effort out of the room and along the passages, she took her to the large hall, where servants were busy laying the long table for the feast.

"There will be seventy here," she said, "and all to do honour to me. How would *you* have liked it, Sweet Marjory? You do not envy me, though you look so sad? But oh! there is more honour for me. Come."

And still, with the application of something like force, she led Marjory out by the front door towards the lawn, where a number of men were, with the light of pine torches, piling up fagots over layers of pitch. The glare of the torches was thrown over the dark bastle

house, and under the relief of the deep shadows, where the light of the moon did not penetrate, was romantic enough even for the taste of Isobel, whose spirit ever panted for display. To add to the effect, the men were jolly ; for their supply of ale had been ample, and the occasion of a marriage in the house of the Bowers warranted a merriment which was acceptable to her for whom all these expensive preparations were made.

"This is the marriage-pile, Marjory," said Isobel. "I am not to be put upon it after the manner of Jephthah's daughter ; but it will blaze up to the sky, and tell the gods and goddesses that there is one to be honoured here on earth. How would *you* have liked that honour, Marjory ? But you are not envious. Come, there is more."

And as she was leading Marjory away, an exclamation from one of the men attracted their attention. On turning round, they saw the men's faces, lighted up by the torches, all directed to the bastle tower on which the glare shone full and red. Their merriment was gone, to give place to the feeling of awe ; nor did a syllable escape from their lips. The eyes of the sisters followed those of the men, and were in like manner riveted.

"It is the wraith bride o' the peel," said the old forester. "She gaes round about and round about. My mither saw it thirty years syne, when the laird brought hame his leddy ; and we ken he broke his leg in coming off his horse to help her down. I have heard her say

'There's evil for the house o' Bower,
When the bride gaes round the bastle tower.'"

"You are a lying knave," cried Isobel. "It is that old cantrup-working witch, Patricia Bower, who should have

been burnt with tar-barrels and tormented by pricklers fifty years ago. Nor ghost, nor ghoul, nor demon or devil, shall come between me and my happy destiny.”

A speech which, spoken in excitement, was cheered by all the men but the unfortunate forester; for, as we have said, they were merry with ale. And they knew by report, as they now saw with their eyes, the beauty of the young woman, who, in addition to her natural charms, appeared, as they whirled the torches round their heads, and the cheers rose and echoed in the woods, to be invested with the dignity of a queen. But as this natural enthusiasm died down, they turned again their wondering eyes to the bastle house; and as the figure still went round the bartisan and round the bartisan, they looked at each other, and shook their heads with a motion which appeared very grotesque in the glare of the torches. At length it disappeared, and they began again to pile the fagots, now in silence, and not with the merry words and snatches of their prior humour, as if each of them had foreseen some evil which he could not define.

Meanwhile Isobel had again seized Marjory, to continue the round of her triumphs.

“We will now go to my boudoir, nor mind that witch,” she said, “and I will show you all the presents I have got from my neighbours and friends. Oh! they are so fine, that did I not know that you are not envious, I would fear that you would tear my eyes out. Oh, but look, there is Ogilvy’s horse standing waiting for him to carry him home, and I shall see him only this once before I am made his wife.” Then, pausing and becoming meditative, she led her sister into the shade of a gigantic elm, the stem of which sufficed to conceal them from observers. “Kneel down,” she continued in a stern tone.

“Why so?” replied Marjory, trembling with fear, yet obeying instinctively.

“Swear,” cried Isobel, “that you will not, before Ogilvy, contradict what I shall say to him about his mother’s gift. Swear.”

“I swear,” replied the sister.

And rising up, her hand was again grasped by Isobel, as she led her forward to where the horse stood. Nor had they proceeded many paces, when Ogilvy himself was observed coming forward. He could see them by the light of the torches, as they saw him; and upon the instant, Isobel, clasping Marjory in her arms, kissed her with all the fervency of love.

“How pleasant this is to me,” said Ogilvy, as he came up equipped and spurred for his ride, “to see you so loving and sisterly!”

“Did I not swear by Dian and the stars I would love her?” said Devil Isobel; “and is she not called Sweet Marjory?”

“Sweet she is,” said he, as he timidly scanned the face of his first love, and pressed her hand; but his countenance changed as he felt the silky-skinned hand of the girl tremble within his, as if it shrunk from the touch, and saw her blue eyes turned on the ground, and heard a sigh steal from her breast. A feeling that was new to him thrilled through the circle of his nerves, and made him tremble to the centre of his being. He had never calculated upon that strange emotion, nor could he analyze it: it was inscrutable, but it was terrible; it was not simply a return of his own love under the restraint of the new one, neither was it simple remorse, but a mixture of various thrills which induced no purpose, but only rendered him uncertain, feeble, and miserable. So engrossed for a moment was he, that he did not even seek the eye of Isobel, who was watch-

ing him in every turn of his countenance. Then he would seek some relief in words.

"You have my mother's love at least, Marjory," he said; and he could not help saying it. "And I shall be pleased to see you wear her gift, which she sent to you through me, who gave it to Isobel."

Marjory was silent, and Ogilvy turned his eye upon Isobel.

"She rejects it," said Isobel, "and wishes me to return it."

"Rejects it!" ejaculated the youth, as he again looked at Marjory.

Marjory was still silent, and her eyes were even more timidly turned to the ground.

"I did not regard the gift as valuable for the brilliants and opals," continued he, "but as conveying the love of my mother; and surely Marjory cannot reject that love."

Yet still was Marjory silent, for she had sworn.

"Oh, she is frightened, poor Sweet Marjory," cried Isobel, with a satirical laugh; "for she has seen the wraith bride on the bastle tower."

"The wraith bride!" responded Ogilvy, relapsing into silence, and instinctively looking round him, where only glared the torchlight among the trees of the lawn, and the dark bodies of the fagot-pilers were moving backwards and forwards. He had heard the couplet mentioned by the forester, and had of course viewed it as a play of superstition; but reason is a weak thing in the grasp of feeling, and now he was all feeling. The remorse of which he had had premonitions, had now taken him as a fit. His eye sought Marjory's down-turned face, and shrunk from Isobel's watchful stare; but the direction of that organ did not form an index to his mind, for his fancy was, even during these

swift instants, busy weaving the many-coloured web of the future of his married life, and clouding it with sombre shades; nor did the active agent hesitate to draw materials from the past fortunes of the house of Bell's Tower, and mix them up as things yet to be repeated. Even the wraith bride performed her part now, where she had feeling to help her weakness, and set her up among realities.

At this critical juncture of Ogilvy's thoughts, there came up from the mansion good Dame Bower herself, of portly corporation, often resonant of a comfortable laugh; and now, when flushed with the exercise of her domestic superintendence, looking the very picture of the joyous mother of a happy bride.

"I had forgotten," she said as she approached, "to ask you to convey my thanks to Dame Ogilvy for that beautiful locket with her hair therein—more precious, I ween, than the diamonds and opals, though these, I'm told, are worth five thousand good merks—which she has so thoughtfully sent to Isobel."

"Isobel!" ejaculated Ogilvy, fixing his eye on the face of his bride, where there were no blushes to reveal the consciousness of deceit. "To Isobel!" he repeated; "and did Isobel say this?"

"Yes," replied the mother.

"It is false," cried the damsel, precipitated by anger into the terrible imputation.

The mother stood aghast, and Marjory held her head away.

"Speak, Marjory," said Ogilvy, with lips that in an instant had become white and parched.

"I have sworn," said Marjory.

"And dare not speak?" said Ogilvy. Then a deep gloom spread over his face, his eye flashed with a sudden flame. He spoke not a word more; but, vaulting into

the saddle, he drove his spurs into the side of his horse, and rode off. As he passed the fagot-hewers, he saw them clustered together, and heard high words among them, with names of so potent a charm to him, that, even in his confusion and speed, he could not drive them from his mind. These names were, Sweet Marjory and Devil Isobel.

And as if the words had entered the rowels and made them sharper, his horse reared, and he sped on with a whirling tumult in his brain, but yet without uttering a word—nor even to himself did he mutter a remark—still urging his steed, yet unconscious that his journey's end would bring no assuagement of that tumult, nor mean of extricating him from his strange and perilous predicament. Nor was he aware of the speed of his riding, or how far he had gone, till he came to some huts in the outskirts of the Craigwood, which bounds the domain of Bell's Tower on the west, where he saw some cottagers assembled at a door, and again heard words which pierced his ear—no other than those of his own marriage. Again urged by curiosity, he put the question,

“Whom do you speak of, good folks?”

“Sweet Marjory,” said one; and another added, “Devil Isobel.”

Fain would he have asked more—these were not to him more than sufficient; but pride interposed, and fear aided pride, and away he again sped even at a still quicker pace. Never before had he been so agitated: fear, anger, or remorse had never ruffled the tenor of an existence which passed amidst rural avocations and unsophisticated pleasures,—knew nothing of intrigue, falsehood, or dissimulation—those parasitic plagues that follow the societies of men. The moon that shone over his head was as placid and beautiful,

and forest and wold as quiet, as they used to be when his mind was a reflection of the peace that was without; but now, as he rode on and on, wild images arose from the roused autonomy of the spirit, and seemed to be impressed by fire,—the face of Isobel reflecting the light of the moon, and those eyes which, looking up, were in their own expression an adjuration similar to that pronounced by her lips, that she would obey him, and deliver the diamond gift to its rightful owner; then the same eyes when, inflamed by the fire of her wrath, she called her mother a liar, and proved her own falsehood, while she cast off the duty of a daughter. But through all glided the face of Sweet Marjory, with its mildness, beneficence, and timidity; and the eye that, quailing under her sister's tyranny, looked so lovingly in the face of the mother, but dared not chide him who had been false to her. He felt within him that revolution from one feeling to its opposite, which, when it begins in the mind, is so energetic and startling. His love for Isobel—which had been a frenzy, tearing him from another love which had been a sweet dream—began to undergo the wonderful change: her beauty faded before a moral expression which waxed hideous, and grew up in these passing moments into a direct contrast with the gentle loveliness of her sister, which, coming from the heart, beamed through features fitted to enhance it. Nor could he stop this revolution of his sentiments, the full effect of which, aggravated by remorse, shook his frame, as his horse bounded, and added to the turmoil within him. Yet ever the words came from his quivering lips—"Am I fated to be the husband of Devil Isobel? Is Sweet Marjory destined to bless the nuptial bed of another?" And at every repetition he unconsciously drove the spur into the sides of his now foaming steed.

But whither all this hot haste—whither was he flying? To his home, where he knew that his mother condemned his choice, though her delicacy had limited her dissatisfaction to that strange but pregnant expression, whereby she had sent her most valuable jewel to her whom she valued and loved, and whom, in the madness of fascination, he had left to sorrow, if not to heartbreaking—perhaps death. He felt that he behoved to be home to make certain preparations for his appearance on the morrow, as a bridegroom by the side of Isobel Bower; and yet he felt that he could not face his mother under the feelings which now ruled him, and the very weakness of his resolution prompted the device of tarrying by the way until she should have gone to bed. He knew where to watch her chamber light, and he began to draw the rein. Yet how unconscious he was of a peculiarity of that power that had been for some time working within him!—yea, even remorse, who, true to her unfailing purpose, was moulding his heart into that yearning to visit the victim on which she insists for ever as a condition of peace to the betrayer. He had come to the cross-road leading eastwards; and even while muttering his purpose of merely prolonging the period of his home-going, he was twitching the rein to the right, so that the obedient steed turned and carried him forward at the old speed. Whither now, versatile and remorseful youth? From this eastern road there goes off, a couple of miles forward, a rough track, leading to the mansion he had so recently left. And it was not long ere he reached the point of turn. Nor was he even decided when there, that he would again draw the rein to the right. But if he was master of his horse, he was not master of himself: the rough track was taken, and Ogilvy was in full swing to Bell's Tower. He did not

know that it is only when the act is accomplished that one thinks of the decrees of Fate, though it is true that the purposes of man are equally fated in their beginnings, when reason is battling against feeling, as in their termination. In how short time was he in the pine wood, behind the house, where were his bane, and perhaps his antidote, though he could not divine the latter! And he trembled as through the trees he saw the flitting lights, as they came and went past the windows, indicating the joy of preparation: not for these he looked, only for one, sombre and steady, like Melancholy's dull eye, wherein no tear glistens. Leaving his horse tied to a pine stem, Ogilvy was in an instant kneeling at the low casement at the foot of the bastle house, where glimmered that light for which he had been so intensely looking.

Was it that grief, forced into an excitement foreign to its lonely, self-indulgent nature, wooed the evening air, to cool by the open window the fever of her slow-throbbing veins? Certain it is at least that Marjory Bower expected no salutation from without at that hour.

"Sweet Marjory, will you listen to one who once dared to love you, and who has now sorrow at his heart, yet Heaven's wrath will not send forth lightnings to kill?"

"What terrible words are these?" replied the maiden, as she took her hand from her brow and looked in the direction of the open casement.

"Not those," replied he, "which are winged with the hope of a bridegroom. But I am miserable! Marjory Bower, I loved you, and you returned my love; I deserted you, and you never even gloomed on me; and I am now the bridegroom of your sister,—ay, your sister, Devil Isobel! Will you give me hope if I break off this marriage?"

"Nay," rejoined she; "that cannot be. You have gone too far to go back with honour."

"Or forward with any hope of happiness," said he. "But I will brave all your father's anger, Isobel's revenge, and my loss of honour, if you will consent to be mine within a year."

"Nay," repeated the maid with a sigh. "Out of my unhappiness may come the happiness of others. Though I may not live to see it, I may die in the hope that Isobel Bower may, in your keeping, come to deserve a name better than that terrible one she has earned, and which just now sounded so terrible from your lips."

"Is she not a liar, who falsified my words?" said he impassionedly. "Is she not a thief, who appropriated the diamond gift of my mother, intended for you? Is she not an undutiful daughter, who first deceived her mother by a falsehood, and then denounced her as herself false? Is that woman, with the form of an angel and the heart of a devil, to be my wife? And does Marjory Bower counsel it? Then Marjory Bower hates Hector Ogilvy!"

"Nay," replied she calmly, "I only love your honour. Night and day I will pray for a blessing on your marriage, and that God, who made the heart of my sister, may change it into love and goodness."

A repressed spasmodic laugh shook the frame of the youth. "What a hope," he said, "on which to found the happiness of a life, and for which to barter such a creature as you! But, Marjory, you have roused the pride of my honour, while you have appeased my remorse; and I will marry Isobel because you have said that I should. It is thus I shall punish myself by becoming a victim in turn to the honour I was false to."

As he pronounced these words, he fixed his eye on

the face of Marjory, which at the moment reflected brightly the light of the lamp. Her eyes were swimming in tears. She seemed to struggle with herself, as if she feared that, in thus counselling him, she incurred some heavy responsibility. So Ogilvy thought. But he little knew that there was mixed up with these emotions the keen anguish of a sacrifice; for she had not as yet admitted to him how dear he had been to her, and how bitterly she had felt the transference of his affections from her to her sister. He waited for a few moments. He got no reply, except from these swimming eyes. "Adieu! dear Marjory," he said; and hastened again to the pine wood, where, having flung himself on his steed, he started for home.

As he hurried along, he felt that he had appeased one feeling at the expense of a life's happiness, and yet he was satisfied, according to that law whereby the present evil always appears the greatest. About half way up the rough track he met one of the servants of Bell's Tower proceeding homewards, and suspecting that he had been with a message to him or his mother, he stopped and questioned him.

"I have been to Dame Ogilvy with a letter from Dame Bower," said the man; "and well I may," he added, as he sided up and whispered, "The fagot-hewers have seen the bride to-night on the top bartisan of the bastle tower."

"And I now see a fool," replied Ogilvy, and rode on. Not that he thought the man the fool he called him, but that he felt it necessary, as many men do, to make a protest against the weakness of superstition at the very moment when the mysterious power was busy with his heart; and, repeating the word "fool," he went on auguring and condemning in the double way of mortals. How strangely he had been led for the

last hour! The terms he had heard applied to his bride, justifying what he had himself seen, had all but resolved him to remain absent from the intended ceremony of the morrow. He had had some lurking hope that Marjory would agree to his resolution, and again inspire him with hope; and he knew that his mother would be pleased with a change which would yield her a chance of having her favourite for her daughter-in-law. He had been proposing as a weak mortal. Another power was purposing as a God; and yet he considered himself as so much master of himself and the occasion as to laugh with bitter scorn at the rustic diviner, and his folly of the apparition bride. And now there was shining before him the light of the lamp from the chamber of his mother, whom he had still stronger reasons than ever for avoiding that night. But even these reasons were unavailing. The spirit of his honour, which had been so fragile a thing when opposed by the advent of a new love, had been breathed upon and increased to a flame by her he had deserted; and he for the moment felt he could face the mild reproof of a mother whom he loved. What a versatile, incomprehensible creature is man, even in those inspired moments, when, with the nerve trembling under the tension of purpose, he appears to himself and others in his highest position! In a few minutes more he was in the presence of his mother.

There sat in her painted chamber the fine gentlewoman, with her fixed eye divining in the light of the gilded lamp, as the spirit cast upon the dark curtain of the future the forms which were but as re-adaptations of the signs of what had come and gone in her memory and experience. The two families had been linked by the power of fate, and the connection, which had never been dissolved, was to evolve in some new form. She

had grieved for her gentle favourite, Marjory Bower; and had she been as stern as she was mild, she would have interposed a parent's authority against her son's change of purpose. Yea, there might have been true affection in that sternness; but such would have been the resolution of a mental strength which she did not possess, for she was as those whose parental love gratifies wilfulness from a fear of producing pain. Nor even now, when she held in her hand a letter of, to her, strange import, could she call up from her soft heart an energy to save her son from the ruin which seemed to impend over him. He stood for a moment before her, silent, pale, and resolved against all chances,—verily a puppet under the reaction of affections and principles he had dared to tamper with, against the injunctions of honour,—and yet he could not see that the soft and trembling hand of her in Bell's Tower, which held the strings that bound him so, held them and straitened them by a spasm. Nor was it of use to him now that the strings trembled, and relaxed only for the time when the soft, reproving, yet loving light of his mother's eye, as it turned from her reverie, fell upon his soul; for his purpose came again, as his lip quivered and he waxed more pale.

“What means this letter?” said she, as she held it forth in her hand. “Mrs. Bower thanks me for the gift I sent to your bride.”

“It means, dear mother,” replied he firmly, “what it says. I was weak enough to think that, if I committed your jewelled locket to Isobel's hand as the mean whereby it would reach Marjory, I would do something to cement their love. I saw Isobel's eye light up as she fixed it on the diamonds—their glare had entered her soul and made it avaricious; and envy threw her red glance to fire the passion. Yes, she

appropriated the gift. I have other evidence than this, even from my bride." And as he pronounced the word "bride," a scornful laugh escaped from him, and alarmed his mother.

"And yet she is your bride, and will be your wife to-morrow?" said she, looking inquiringly.

"She will," replied he, in a tone which, though soft, if not pitiful, was firm, if a trait of sarcasm against himself might not have been detected in it.

"Strange!" ejaculated the mother, as she still fixed her eyes on him. Then, musing a little, "Do you know that the bride has been seen to-night on the bastle tower?"

"Superstition."

"An ill-used word, Hector," said she; "as if God was not the Ruler of his own world. When we see unnatural motives swaying men, and all working to an event, are we not to suppose that that event shall also be out of Nature's scheme? and that which is out of Nature's scheme must be in God's immediate hand. What motives impel you to wed a woman with whom you must be miserable, and have that misery enhanced by seeing every day her who would have rendered you happy?"

"My honour pledged to the world, which must condemn and laugh at a breach of faith, not to be justified except at the expense of Isobel."

"A false reason," continued the mother. "Is there more honour in adhering to a breach of honour than in returning to the honour that was broken?"

"There is another reason, mother," said Ogilvy, as he carried his hand over his sorrowful face.

"What is that?"

"Sweet Marjory commands me."

"Ah, Hector, Hector, how little you know of the

heart of woman! Know you not that in a forsaken woman the heart has an irony even when it is breaking? Ask her if you should wed her rival, and the breaking heart-string will respond Yes, even as the cord of the harp will twang when it is severed. Well do I know Sweet Marjory, and what she must have felt when she uttered this command. The canker has begun, and she will die. The worm does not seek always the withered leaf. You've heard the song that Patricia used to sing—

“‘The dainty worm, it loves the tomb,
And gnaws, and gnaws its nightly food;
But a daintier worm selects the bloom,
And a daintier still affects the bud.’”

“Oh, God forgive me!” ejaculated the miserable youth, as, holding his hand on his brow, he rushed out of the room and sought his bed-chamber. Was there ever such a night before the day, of all days auspicious to mortals, of the culminating joy of human life! Could he not find refuge in sleep, where the miserable so often seek to escape from the vibrations of the leaping, palpitating nerve, inflamed by the fever of life? A half-hour's dreamy consciousness, an hour's vision of returning images, rest and unrest, haunting scenes woven by some secret power, so varied, so ephialtic, so monstrous, yet all, somehow or another, however unlike the reality, still vindicating a connection. Why should Sweet Marjory be in the deep recesses of the pine wood, resting by his foaming steed, with his mother sitting and breathing hope's accents in her ear, and ever and again calling on him in sobbing vocables to return from his pursuit of another? He would return. The charm of her sweet voice is felt to be irresistible; yet it is resisted. And though he looks

back only to see her by the flaught of the lightning that plays among the trees, his steps are forward, where Devil Isobel charms him with a song, in comparison of which the magic of the sirens is but the rustle of the reed as it swerves in the blast. He struggles, and seizes the stems of the pines to hold him from his progress and keep him steady; and he writhes as he finds he cannot obey the maternal appeal to a son's love. All is still again, and there is rest, only to be alternated by the recurring visions always assuming new forms, changing and disappearing, flaring up again, and then the deep breast-riding oppression, and those hollow moans, which never can be imitated by the waking sense, as if Nature preserved this domain of the spirit as an evidence, in the night of the soul, that there is another world where the limbo of agony is not less certain than the heaven which is simulated by sweet dreams.

But, *lucidus die—nocte inutilis*. As the day dawned, and the morning sun, fresh from the east, threw in between the chinks of the shutters the virgin beams, Ogilvy felt the truth of the old saying, that every day vindicates its two conditions of good and evil. There was again a change in the versatile mind of the romantic youth; and Honour, pinkt out in those gaudy decorations woven by the busy spirits that move so cunningly the springs of man's thoughts in a conventional world, appeared before him. If Isobel was still the Devil Isobel, Honour was a smiling angel, even more beautiful than Sweet Marjory. Yet he was not happy—only firm, as he confessed by that lying power of the mind, to the strength of bonds he had himself imposed, and yet repented of—setting necessity as a will-power amidst the wreck and ruin of his affections. The hour advanced, and he must superin-

duce the happy bridegroom on the dead statue. Unsteady and fitful even in the common actions of life—lifting the wrong thing, and suddenly throwing it down in the wrong place, again to snatch the right thing at the wrong time—he was not so this morning. Every step and manipulation was like the movement of a machine. Composedness was a luxury to him. Ornament after ornament, at a time when a bridegroom's decorations were the expression of a rude refinement, found its place with a steady, nay, affectedly formal hand; yea, a more cool bridegroom had never been seen in the world's history, since that eventful morning when the hero of Bœotia put on his lion's skin, and took up his wooden club, to marry the fifty daughters of the king, though among these, if the wise man is right, there must have been forty-nine devils. As the solemn work went on, he looked again and again into the mirror, where he saw none of the wrinkles of care, no brow-knitting of fractionousness, no sternness of resolute determination,—all quiet, smooth, even mild. Ay, such a mime is man when he is a mome, that he even smiled as he felt his pulse,—how cool was his blood, how regular the vibrations! And so the mummary went on: the flowered-red vest, the braided coat of sky-blue, the cravat, the ruffles, the wrist-bands scalloped and stiff, the indispensable ruff, concealed behind by the long locks of auburn, so beautiful in Isobel's eyes, that flowed over his broad shoulders.

The work was finished; Ogilvy was dressed—his body in all the colours of the arc of hope—his mind in the dark midnight weeds of a concealed misery, concealed even from himself. He sought the chamber of his mother, and, taking her hand, kissed it fervently; but could not trust himself to even a broken syllable of

speech, and his silence was sympathetic. She looked into the face of her son, and then threw her eye solemnly over the array of his dress. The tear stood apparent, yet her face seemed to have borrowed his composedness, as if she felt that the old doom still followed the house of Ogilvy, and was inevitable, when the evil genius of the Bowers was in the ascendant. There was no reproof now, save that which lies in the dumb expression of sorrow—even that reproof which, melting the obstruction of man's egotism, finds its way to the heart, when even scorn would be only a hardening coruscation. Yet even this he could bear for the sake of that conventionality which is a tyrant. Turning away his head, he again kissed the soft hand, and hurried away.

As he issued from the gate and mounted his steed, now refreshed from the rough stress of the previous evening, the sun shone high and flaring, and the face of the country, with its rising hills and heather-bloom, and patches of waving corn, responded—as became it surely on a bridal morning—to the clang of the bell in Bell's Tower,—so like in all but the workings of the heart to the Sabbath morning when the union is to be between the spirit of man and the Lamb without guile. Yet art, self-confident and pragmatic, was not to be cajoled by the solicitations of, to it, a lying nature, however beautiful; and Ogilvy found it convenient, if not manly and heroic, to knit his eyebrows against the sun. So does the Indian hurl his wooden spear against the lightning, because he is a greater being than the Author of the thunder. So he rode on to where the bells rung—for was not he specially called?—the gloom on his countenance, with which his forced determination kept pace, increasing as he proceeded. Nor had he ever ridden thus before. Even his steed might have known, as he opened his nostrils, that there was

something more than common in the wind's eye, accustomed as he was to the speed of enthusiasm, or the walk of exhaustion. He was now a solemn stalking-horse, bearing a rigid, buckram-mailed showman, whose only sound or movement resided in the plates of his armour, or his lath sword or gilded spontoon.

As Ogilvy had thus enrolled himself among the chivalry of honour, and was consequently, in his own estimation, as we have hinted, a personage of romance, so was it only consistent with the indispensable gloom of his dignity and sternness that he should ride alone : nor was it seeming that he should accost the guests whom he saw on either side, obeying the call of the bell, and riding along to the bridal and the feast. Yet the scene might have enlivened somewhat a very gloomy knight, as, looking around, he saw the lairds rounding the bases of the hills, and heard, as others came into sight, the sound of bagpipes, however little these might be associated with chivalric notions and aspirations. But then it was not easy to act this solitary part ; for what more natural than that those passing to his own celebration should salute him ? Nor could he avoid those salutations.

"Joy to thee, Ogilvy," said one, as he rode up ; "the nightshade is sweeter than the rose ;" and departed.

"A happy day," said another, "when the wolf becomes more innocent than the lamb."

"Good morning, bridegroom," said a third. "The sun shines bright, and the moss-brown tarn is more limpid than the running rill."

"All happiness," said a fourth rider, "when the merle nestles with the jolly owl, and is not afraid when he sounds his horn."

But Ogilvy only compressed his lips the more, and

looked the more gloomy, solacing himself with the vision of Honour, the beautiful yet stern virgin, and immaculate as she who shook her mailed petticoats after getting out of Jupiter's head. Nor was the inspiration diminished as he now saw rising before him the rugged pile of Bell's Tower, wherein the bell rang still more lustily as the hour approached. The guests were thronging in a multiform, many-coloured mass, all eager for the honour of a Bower's smile. He was soon among the midst of them, repaying neither compliment, nor salutation, nor mute nod, with a single sign of acknowledgment. And now he entered the great hall, where already the invited numbers were nearly completed. How grand the scene! What silks, and satins, and taffetas, flowerings, braidings, and be-purflings, and hooped inflations! what towering toupees, built up with horse-hair and dyed hemp, stiffened with starch! what nosegays, redolent of heather-bells, and roses, and orange blossoms! There sat Dame Bower herself, fat and jolly, with her ruby dewlap, looking dignity; and Bower, the laird, great in legend. Mess John, too, even fatter than tradition will have him—the sleek bald head and face, where a thousand slynesses could play together without jostling. But what were all these, and the fairest and the proudest there, to Isobel Bower, as, arrayed in her long white veil, she sailed about, heedless of all decorum, showering her triumph upon envious damsels, as if she would blight all their fond hopes to make a rich soil for the flowering of her own! If others sat and looked for being looked at, and others stood for being admired, she walked and moved for worship, as if she claimed the peripatetic honour of the entire round of adoration. Not that she stared for it: she was too intensely magnetized to doubt of the jumping of the steel sparks

to be all arranged *rayonnant*, like a horse-shoe, round the centre of her glory. Then, as there is by the domestic law a wearock in every nest, however speckled, and however redolent of balm-leaves or resonant of chirpings, where was Sweet Marjory Bower? Where that law ought to place her, by older legends than the date of Bower pride and power—in a corner, plainly dressed, and trying with downcast eyes to escape observation. But how pallid!—as if all the colours there had vied to steal from her cheeks, not the rosy bloom—for it never was there—but the fresh white of the lily, more beautiful than all the flowers of the garden; and not the colour alone, but the light itself of the lily's eye. Nay, it would seem that the greatest robber of all was her sister, whose look turned upon her as if in scorn of her humility, and in pleasure of her woe.

As Ogilvy entered, walking up direct and stedfastly to the midst of the great hall, there arose the welcome buzz, like that humming which makes musical the sphere where comes the reigning queen of the hive. But how soon, as the bell in the tower ceased to ring, was all that noise hushed into a death-like silence, as he stood without sign or movement, with his arms crossed, and his gloomy eyes fixed on the only empty space in that crowded assembly! Would he not look at the bride, or salute the bride's mother, or shake hands with the bride's father, or do any one of all those many things which lay to his duty—far more to his inclination—as a happy bridegroom? Not one of them. And there he stood, as a motionless Grecian god hewn out of veritable panthelion, with its ivory eyes, and the mute worshippers all about. Nay, the likeness was even more perfect; for as these worshippers, from the very fear of reverence and the impression of awe, kept at a distance from that centre of deity, so those guests

who were nearest to the strange man moved instinctively away, leaving him in the middle of the charmed ring. But even this did not move him. Then there was business to be done. "Oh! he was only meditative." The greatness of the occasion was the mother of a hundred excuses. Still to all it was oppressive, killing enthusiasm, and so unlike what these gay hopefuls had prefigured of that celestial state in which they wished themselves to be. Only Isobel seemed unchanged. She whispered to Mess John—most unseemly; but was she not the Devil Isobel? Ogilvy, even as a statue, was hers, and could not get away. Then the bridesmaids sought each other, by the clustering sympathy of their gay wreaths and their office, and the bridesman stood in readiness. Mess John was at the altar; and the bell was to ring the celebrating peal after the ceremony was ended, and the guests should fall to their knives and forks; and the retainers on the lawn, where the fire blazed wild to roast the ox and honour the bride, should sit down to their marriage feast.

As Solemnity is the mother of Angerona, with her finger on her lip, so here reigned now the utmost stillness that could be enforced by heaving hearts against the buzz of a crowd. Scarcely a sound was heard as the altar was encircled. You might have detected a sigh, if it had not been that every sigh was suppressed. Even Isobel was mute, but not from any cessation of her triumph—rather from the impression of its culmination in possession. She stood grandly, looking around her, in defiance of the inexorable law of down-gazing on the ground, where brides see so much which no one else sees. Nor had she yet expressed by a look any wonder at the statue bridegroom, whose attitude was still unchanged. All is eye, and ear, and throbbing heart, when of a sudden the door of the great hall

opened, calling the eye in the direction of the screech. Who dared? Some one more daring than common humanity. A figure entered, in the dress of another bride,—a tall figure, with surely nothing to be covered by the white satin and the long lace mantilla, suspended from the top of a wreathed head white as the driven snows of Salmon, but bones, sheer bones. The face could scarcely be seen for the folds of the veil: only two eyes, with no more light in them than what plays on the surface of untransparent things, and fixed and immoveable as if they saw nothing. The guests were breathless from stupefying amazement. They beheld it pass into the middle of the hall, where, in the space that had been deserted, it began a movement something like dancing. Strange mutterings of a broken-voiced song, with words about long years having passed away, rhyming with bridal day, and so forth, in the cauldron-kettle-and-incantation style, came in snatches.

"It is that infernal old witch, Patricia Bower," screamed Devil Isobel.

And rushing forward, the impassioned creature threw the weight of her body on the composition of bones and satin. It fell, with a loud shrill scream from a windpipe dried by the breath of ninety-seven years.

Dame Bower and Sweet Marjory rushed forward and drew back the veil. It was the antediluvian Patricia. She was dead. The last spark had been offered to Hymen, and the incense canister was broken. Drops of blood issued from her mouth and nose, and sat upon the marble face, with still remains of the old beauty in it which had charmed Walter Ogilvy, like dots on the tiger lily.

At this moment the bell began to clang. Devil Isobel was gone. She had hurried out the moment

she knew that the spark of life had fled. Nor could she be found. The song says—

“They sought her here, they sought her there,
By lochs and streams that scent the main,
By forests dark, and gardens fair;
But she was never seen again.”

A trick, this last line, of some of the old legend-mongers of the Bell's Tower minstrels, no doubt to conceal the shame of the family; for Devil Isobel had flown to the tower, where, having concealed herself till the bell-ringers went away to join in the feast of the ox, which they never tasted even after so much pulling and hauling, she mounted to the belfry. Somehow she had contrived to cast the bell-rope round one of the beams by which the bell was suspended, so as to produce no noise, and then, having made a noose of a different kind from that she had that day been busily twining, she suspended herself by the neck. It was some days before she was discovered. The long white figure, still arrayed in the marriage dress with the flowing veil, had been observed by some of the searchers; and then, strange enough, it was remembered that one solitary clang of the bell had been heard after the cessation of the ringing. That was the death-peal of Isobel Bower. But, a year after, that same bell had another peal to sound—no other than the celebration of the marriage of Hector Ogilvy and Sweet Marjory. Some say that Bell's Tower got its name from the contraction of Isobel. Names stick after the things have passed away. They did well at least to change the rope—*finis funis*.

DOCTOR DOBBIE.

THE particular day in the life of the worthy disciple of Esculapius to which we desire to direct the attention of the reader, was raw, coldish, and drizzly in the morning, but cleared up towards noon; and although it never became what could be called warm (it was the latter end of September), it turned out a very passable sort of day on the whole—such a day as no man could reasonably object to, unless he had some particular purpose of his own to serve. In such case he might perhaps have wished more rain, or probably more sunshine, as the one or the other suited his interest; but where no such selfish motives interfered, the day must have been generally allowed to have been a good one. The thermometer stood at—we forget what; and the barometer indicated “Fair.”

PERSONAL APPEARANCE, CHARACTER, AND PECULIARITIES
OF THE DOCTOR.

The doctor was a little stout man, not what could be called corpulent, but presenting that sort of plump appearance which gives the idea of a person's being hard-packed, squeezed, crammed into his skin.

Such was the doctor, then—not positively fat, but thick, firm, and stumpy; the latter characteristic being considerably heightened by his always wearing a pair of glossy Hessian boots, which, firmly encasing his little thick legs up nearly to the knees, gave a peculiar air of

stamina and solidity to his nether person. The doctor stood like a rock in his Hessians, and stumped along in them—for he was excessively vain of them—as proudly as a field-marshal, planting his little iron heels on the flag-stones with a sharpness and decision that told of a firm and vigorous step.

The doctor was no great hand at his trade ; but this, it is but fair to observe, was not his own opinion. It was the opinion only of those who employed him, and of the little public to whom he was known. He himself entertained wholly different sentiments on the subject. The doctor, in truth, was a vain, conceited little gentleman ; but, withal, a pleasant sort of person, and very generally liked. He sung a capital song, and had an inexhaustible fund of animal spirits.

One consequence of the latter circumstance was his being much invited out amongst his friends and acquaintances. He was, in fact, a regular guest at all their festivities and merry-makings, and on these occasions used to get himself fully more strongly malted than became a gentleman of his grave profession.

When returning home of a night in this state, the little doctor's little iron heels might be heard rap-rapping on the flag-stones at a great distance in the quiet street, for he then planted them with still more decision and vigour than when sober ; and so well known in his neighbourhood was the sound of his footsteps, so audible were they in the stillness of the night, and so habitually late was he in returning home—his profession forming an excellent excuse for this—that people, even while sitting at their own firesides, or, it might be, in bed, although at the height of three storeys, became aware, the moment they heard his heels, that the doctor was passing beneath ; and the exclamations, "That's the doctor," or "There goes the doctor," announced the

important fact to many a family circle. All unconscious, however, of these recognitions, the doctor stumped on his way, reflecting the while, it might be, on the good cheer he had just been enjoying.

On these occasions, the doctor, while he kept the open street, got on swimmingly; but the dark and somewhat tortuous staircase which he had to ascend to reach his domicile—the said domicile being on the third flat—used to annoy him sadly. When very much overcome, as, we grieve to say it, the doctor very frequently was, the labour it cost him to make out the three stairs was very serious. It was long protracted, too; it took him an immense time; for, conscious of his unsteady condition, he climbed slowly and deliberately, but we cannot add quietly; for his shuffling, kicking, and blowing, to which he frequently added a muttered objurgation or two on missing a step, as he struggled up the dark stair, were distinctly audible to the whole land. By merely listening, they could trace his whole progress with the utmost accuracy, from the moment he entered the close, until the slam of a door announced that the doctor was housed. They could hear him pass along the close—they could hear him commence his laborious ascent—they could hear him struggling upwards, and, anon, the point of his boot striking against a step, which he had taken more surely than necessary—they could hear him gain the landing-place at his own door, signified by a peculiar shuffle, which almost seemed to express the intelligence that a great work had been accomplished—they could hear the doctor fumbling amongst his keys and loose coin for his check-key, and again fumbling with this check-key about its aperture in the door, the hitting of the latter being a tedious and apparently most difficult achievement—and, lastly, they could hear the door

flung to with great violence, announcing the finale of the doctor's progress.

Over and above the more ordinary and obvious difficulties attending the doctor's ascent on such occasions, and under such circumstances as those of which we speak, there was one of a peculiar and particularly annoying nature. This was the difficulty he found in discriminating his own landing-place from the others,—a difficulty which was greatly increased by the entire similarity of all the landing-places on the stair, the doors in all of which were perfect counterparts of each other, and stood exactly in the same relative positions. This difficulty often nonplussed him sadly; but he at length fell upon a method of overcoming it, and of ensuring his making attempts on no door but his own. He counted the landing-places as he gained them, pausing a second or two on each to draw breath, and impress its number on his memory,—one, two, three, then out with the check-key.

Now this was all very well had the doctor continued to reckon accurately; but, considering the state of obfuscation in which he generally returned home at night, it was very possible that he might miscount on an occasion, and take that for three which, according to Cocker, was only two, or that for two which, by the same authority, was but one. This was perfectly possible, as the sequel of our tale will sufficiently prove. In the meantime, we proceed to other matters; and, to make our history as complete as possible, we start anew with—

THE DOCTOR'S SHOP.

It had not a very imposing appearance; for, to tell a truth, the doctor's circumstances were by no means in a palmy state. The shop, therefore, was decidedly

a shabby one. It was very small and very dirty, with a little projecting bow window, the lower panes of which were mystified with some sort of light green substance—paint or paper, we don't know which—in order to baffle the curiosity of the prying urchins who used to congregate about it. Not that they were attracted by anything in the window itself, but that it happened to be a favourite station of the boys in the neighbourhood,—a sort of mustering place, or place of call, where they could at any time find each other. The typical display in the doctor's window consisted of a blue bottle, a pound of salts, and a serpent; the second being made up into labelled packages of about an ounce weight each, and built up with nice skill against one of the panes, so as to make as much show as possible. The serpent was a native of the Lammermoor Hills, which a boy, who drove a buttermilk cart, brought in one morning, and sold to the doctor for a shilling.

The inside of the doctor's shop, which besides being very dirty was very dark, had a strange, mysterious, equivocal sort of character about it. Everything was dingy, and greasy, and battered, and mutilated. Dirty broken glasses stood in dark and dirty corners; rows of dirty bottles, some without stoppers, and some with the necks chipped off, and containing drops of black, villanous-looking liquids, stood on dirty shelves; rows of battered, unctuous-looking drawers, rising tier above tier, lined one side of the shop, most of which were handled with bits of greasy cord, the brass handles with which they had been originally furnished having long since disappeared, and never having been replaced.

What these drawers contained, no human being but the doctor himself could tell. In truth, few of them

contained anything at all. Those that did, could be described only as holding mysterious, dirty-looking powders, lumps of incomprehensible substances, or masses of desiccated vegetable matter of powerful and most abominable flavour.

For all these, the doctor had, doubtless, very learned names; but such as we have described them was their appearance to the eye of the uninitiated.

To complete the charms of the doctor's medical establishment, it was constantly pervaded by a heavy, unearthly smell, that, we verily believe, no man but himself could have inhaled for an hour and lived.

Notwithstanding the unpretending and homely character of the doctor's establishment, it boasted a sounding name. The doctor himself called it, and so did the signboard over the door, "The —— Medical Hall,"—a title which the envious thought absurd enough for a place whose proudest show was a blue bottle, a pound of salts, and a serpent. But these people did not recollect, or did not choose to recollect, the high pretensions of the doctor himself. They did not advert to the numerous degrees, honorary titles, fellowships, etc., which he had acquired, otherwise they would have looked to the man, not to the shop. Probably, however, few of them were aware of the number of these which he boasted; but it is a fact, nevertheless, that the doctor could, and did on particular occasions, sign himself thus:—"David Dobbie, M.D.; E.F.; M.N.O.; U.V.; Z.Y.X.; W.V.U.;" nor did he hesitate sometimes to alter the letters according to the inspiration of the happy moment.

Now, had the doctor's right to all these titles been taken into account, and, so taken, been appreciated as it ought, there would have been fewer sneers at his Medical Hall than there was as matters stood.

THE INVITATION.

In another part of this history we have stated that the doctor, being generally liked, was much invited out to feastings and merry-makings, and convivialities of all sorts, from the aristocratic roast turkey and bottle of port, to the plebeian Findhorn haddock and jug of toddy. But all, in this way, was fish that came in the doctor's net. Provided there was quantity—particularly in the liquor department—he was not much given to shying at quality. He certainly preferred wine, but by no means turned up his nose at a tumbler. Few men, in fact, could empty more at a sitting.

It was observed of the doctor, by those who knew him intimately, that he was always in bad humour on what he called blank days. These were days on which he had no invitation on hand for any description of guzzle whatever—either dinner, tea, supper, or a “just come up and take a glass of toddy in the evening.” This seldom occurred, but it did sometimes happen; and on these occasions the doctor's short and snappish answers gave sufficient intimation of the provoking fact.

In such temper, then, and for such reason, was the doctor in the forenoon of the particular day in his life which we have made the subject of this paper. He was as cross as an old drill-sergeant; and what made him worse, the affair he had been at on the preceding night had been a very poor one. He had been hinted away after the third tumbler—treatment which had driven the doctor to swear, mentally, that he would never enter the house again. How far he would keep this determination, it remained for another invitation to prove.

In this mood, then, and at the time already alluded to, was the doctor employed, behind his counter, in

measuring off some liquid in a graduated glass, which he held between him and the light, and on which he was looking very intently, as the liquid was precious, the quantity wanted small, and the glass but faintly marked, when a little boy entered the shop, and inquired if Dr. Dobbie was within.

"Yes. What do you want?" replied the doctor gruffly, and without taking his eye off the graduated glass.

"Here's a line for ye, sir," said the boy, laying a card on the counter.

"Who's it from?" roared the doctor.

"Frae Mr. Walkinshaw, sir," replied the boy, meekly; "and he would like to ken whether ye can come or no."

"Come; oh, surely. Let me see," said the doctor. "Come; ay, certainly," he added, his tone suddenly dropping down to the mild and affable, and speaking from an intuitive knowledge of the tenor of the card. "Surely; let me see." And the doctor opened the note and read, his eyes gloating, and his countenance dissolving into smiles, as he did so:—

"DEAR DOCTOR,—A few friends at half-past eight. Just a haddock and a jug of toddy. Be as pointed as you can. Won't be kept *very* late. Dear Doctor, yours truly,

"R. WALKINSHAW."

"My compliments to Mr. Walkinshaw," said the doctor, with a bland smile, and folding up the card with a sort of affectionate air as he spoke, "and tell him I will be pointed. Stop, boy," he added, on the latter's being about to depart with his message; "stop," he said, running towards his till, and thence abstracting threepence, which he put into the boy's hand, with a—"There, my boy, take that to buy marbles." The doctor always rewarded such messengers; but he did

so systematically, and by a rule of his own. For an invitation to breakfast he gave a penny, thus estimating that meal at all but the lowest possible rate; for an invitation to dinner he gave sixpence; for one to supper, threepence, as exemplified in the instance above.

In possession of Mr. Walkinshaw's invitation, the doctor continued in excellent spirits throughout the remainder of the day.

THE GUZZLE.

At the height of three stories, in a respectable-looking tenement in a certain quarter of a certain city which shall be nameless, there resided a decent widow woman of the name of Paton, who kept lodgers.

At the particular time, and on the particular occasion at and on which we introduce the reader to Mrs. Paton's lodging-house, there was a certain parlour in the said house in a state of unusual tidiness. Not to say that this parlour was not always in good order: it was; but in the present instance, it displayed an extra degree both of *red-ding-up* and of comfort.

An unusually large fire blazed in the polished grate, and a couple of candles, in shining candlesticks, stood on the bright mahogany table. On a small old-fashioned sideboard was exhibited a goodly display of bottles and glasses, flanked by a sugar basin, heaped up with snowy bits of refined sugar; a small plate of cut cheese, another of biscuit, and a third bearing a couple of lemons.

Everything about the room, in short, gave indication of an approaching guzzle. The symptoms were unmistakeable. The only occupant of the room at this time was a gentleman, who sat in an arm-chair opposite the

fire, carelessly turning over the leaves of a new magazine. His heart, evidently, was not in the employment; he was merely putting off time, and doing so with some impatience of manner, for he was ever and anon pulling out his watch to see how the night sped on.

This gentleman was Mr. Walkinshaw, the doctor's inviter, head clerk in a respectable mercantile establishment in the city; and, we need hardly say, one of Mrs. Paton's lodgers. Neither need we say, we fancy, that he was just now waiting, and every moment expecting, the arrival of the doctor, and the other friends he had invited, nor that the preparations above described were intended for the special enjoyment of the party alluded to.

"Five-and-twenty minutes to nine," said Mr. Walkinshaw, looking for the twentieth time at the dial of his watch. "I wonder what has become of the doctor! *he* used to be so pointed."

At this moment a ring of the door bell announced a visitor. Mr. Walkinshaw, in his impatience for the appearance of his friends, and not doubting that this was one of them, snatched up the candle, and ran to the door himself. He opened it; when a little thick-set figure, in Hessian boots, wrapped up in an ample blue cloth cloak, with an immense cape, and having a red comforter tied round his throat, presented himself. It was the doctor.

"How d'ye do? and how d'ye do? Come away. Glad to see you!" with cordial shaking of hands and joyous smiles, marked the satisfaction with which the inviter and the invited met. The doctor was in high spirits, as he always was on such occasions; that is, when there was a prospect of good eating and drinking, and nothing to pay.

Having assisted the doctor to divest himself of his cloak, hat, and comforter, Mr. Walkinshaw ushered him

into his room; and having kindly seated him in the arm-chair which he had himself occupied a minute or two before, he ran to the sideboard, took therefrom a small bottle, and very small glass of the shape of a thistle-top, and approaching his guest, said in a coaxing tone, filling up at the same time—

“Thimbleful of brandy, doctor; just to take the chill off.” Anything for an excuse in such cases.

“Why, no objection, my dear sir,” said the doctor, smiling most graciously, taking the proffered glass of ruby-coloured liquid, wishing health and a good wife to his host, and tossing off the tiny bumper.

The doctor had scarcely bolted his alcohol, when the door bell again rung violently.

“There *they* are at last!” exclaimed Walkinshaw, joyously.

And there they were, to be sure. Half-a-dozen rattling fellows all in a lump. In they poured into Walkinshaw’s room with hilarious glee.

“Ah, doctor. Oh, doctor. Here too, doctor. Hope you’re well, doctor. Glad to see you, doctor!” resounded in all quarters; for they were all intimate acquaintances of our medical friend, and were really delighted to see him.

To this running fire of salutation, the doctor replied by a series of becks, bows, and smiles, and a shaking of hands, right and left, in rapid succession.

All these, and such like preliminaries, gone through, the party took their seats around the table, and the business of the evening began. It soon did more: it progressed, and that most joyously. Jug followed jug in rapid succession. The doctor got into exuberant spirits, and sung several of his best songs, in his best manner. But alas!—

“Pleasures are,” etc. etc.

They are, sweet poet, and no man could be more strongly impressed with, or would have more readily allowed the truth and happy application of thy beautiful similes, than the doctor, on the occasion of which we are speaking. Enjoyment was quickly succeeded by satiety; and alert apprehension, and quick perception, by that doziness and obfuscation of the faculties which marks the *quantum suff.* at the festive board.

The doctor was a man who could have said with the face of clay—

“And cursed be he who first cries, Hold, enough!”

But, being but mortal, after all, his powers were not illimitable. There was a boundary which even he could not pass, and at the same time lay his hand on his breast and say, “I’m sober.”

That boundary the doctor had now passed by a pretty good way. In plain language, he was cut, very much cut, as was made sufficiently evident by various little symptoms,—such as a certain thickness of speech; a certain diffusion of dull red over the whole countenance, extending to and including the ears, which seemed to become transparent, like a pair of thin, flat, red pebbles; a certain look of stupidity and non-comprehension; and a certain heaviness and lacklustreness of eye, that gave these organs a strong resemblance to a couple of parboiled gooseberries.

Sensible of his own condition, sensible that he could hold out no longer, the doctor now moved, in the most intelligible language which he could conveniently command, that the diet should be deserted *pro loco et tempore*.

The motion was unanimously approved of; this unanimity having been secured by the inability of several of the party, who had been rendered *hors de combat*, to express dissent.

A general break up, then, was the consequence of the doctor's motion. Candle in hand, Mr. Walkinshaw rose and accompanied his guests to the door, towards which they moved in a long irregular file, he leading the way. In the passage, however, a momentary halt was called. It was to allow the doctor to don himself in his walking gear. With some assistance from his host, this was soon accomplished. His hat was stuck on his head, his martial cloak thrown around him, and his immense comforter, like a red blanket, coiled around his neck. Thus accoutred, the doctor and his friends evacuated the premises of their worthy host, Mr. Walkinshaw.

THE RETURN HOME, AND INCIDENTS THEREFROM ARISING.

The doctor had not proceeded far on his way home, until he found himself alone. One after another, his friends had popped off; some disappearing mysteriously, others giving fair warning of their departure, by shaking him by the hand, and wishing him

———"good night,
And rosy dreams and slumbers light."

Left to his own reflections, and, we may add, to his own exertions, the doctor stumped bravely homeward, and, without meeting with anything particularly worthy of notice, arrived safely at his own *close* mouth.

In another part of this history, we have mentioned that there were one or two difficulties that always awaited the doctor on his return home when in the particular state in which he was at this moment. The first of these difficulties was to climb the dark tortuous staircase, on the third story of which was his domicile. The second was to discriminate between his neighbours'

door and his own. The reader will recollect that, to obviate this last difficulty, the doctor fell upon the ingenious expedient of counting the landing-places as he ascended, his own being number three.

The reader's memory refreshed as to these particulars, we proceed to say that the doctor, having traversed the close with a tolerably firm and steady step, commenced his laborious ascent of the stair in his usual manner, but with evidently fully more difficulty, as some of the neighbours, who heard his struggles, remarked, than ordinary,—a circumstance from which they inferred—and correctly enough, as we have seen—that the doctor was more than ordinarily overcome.

The first flight of steps the doctor accomplished with perfect success, and with perfect accuracy recorded it as number one. This done, he commenced the ascent of number two; and, after a severe struggle, accomplished it also. But by the time he had done so, the doctor had lost his reckoning, and, believing that he had gained his own landing-place, from which, we need hardly remind the reader, he was yet an entire flight of stairs distant, he deliberately pulled out his check-key, and applied it to the door of the neighbour who lived right under him,—a certain Mr. Thomson, who pursued the intellectual calling of a cheesemonger.

Having inserted the key in the lock, the doctor gave it the necessary twitch; and, obedient to the hint, the bolt rose, the door opened, and the doctor walked in.

Being pitch-dark, and the two houses—that is, the doctor's and Mr. Thomson's—being of precisely the same construction within, nothing presented itself to the unconscious burglar to inform him of the blunder he had made.

Satisfied, or rather never doubting, that all was right, the doctor shut the door, and, groping along the

passage, sought the door of a small apartment on the left, which, in his own house, was his bedroom. This room he readily found; and it so happened that in Mr. Thomson's house this same apartment was also a bedroom; so that the doctor, under all circumstances, could not be blamed for feeling perfectly at ease as to his situation. In this feeling, he planted himself down in a chair, and began deliberately to unbutton his waistcoat, preparatory to tumbling in. While thus employed, the doctor indulged in a sort of soliloquy, embracing certain reflections and reminiscences connected with his present condition and recent revelries.

"All right, then," said the doctor, referring to his present position. "Snug in my own bedroom. Capital song yon of Ned's; one of Gilfirian's, I think. Writes a beautiful song, Gil — a pretty song — very pretty. Good feeling, sweet natural sentiment, and all that sort of thing. Must get his new edition, and learn half-a-dozen of them. Hah! confoundedly drunk though — that lee-lurch ugly. Never mind: dead sober in the morning; sound as a roach. Take a seidlitz, and all right."

While thus expressing the ideas that were crowding through his addled brain, the doctor's attention was suddenly attracted by a noise at the outer door. He paused to listen. It was some one, with a key, endeavouring to gain access. What could it mean? Thieves, robbers, no doubt of it. The doctor did not doubt it. So, grasping a huge, thick crab-stick, which he always carried at night, and which he had on the present occasion laid against the wall close by where he sat, the doctor stole on tiptoe towards the door, and taking up a position about a yard distant from it, raised his crab-stick aloft, and in this attitude slily awaited the entrance of the thief, whom he pro-

posed to knock quietly down the moment he passed the door-way.

Leaving the doctor in this gallant position for a few seconds, we step aside to inform the reader of a circumstance or two with which it is right he should be made acquainted. In the first place, he should be, as he now is, informed that the person at the door, and whom the doctor took to be a midnight robber, was no other than the doctor's neighbour, Mr. Thomson himself, the lawful occupant of the house of which the former had taken possession. He had happened, like the doctor, to have been out late that night; and, like the doctor, too, was several sheets in the wind. However, that is neither here nor there to our story. But it is of some consequence to it to add, inasmuch as it accounts for the non-appearance of any one to avert the impending catastrophe, that there was no one residing in Mr. Thomson's house at the particular period of which we speak, but Mr. Thomson himself; his wife, children, and servant, being at sea-bathing quarters. Thus, then, it was that the doctor had been allowed to take and keep such undisturbed possession of the premises.

Again, the doctor being a bachelor, kept no servant at all; the domestic duties of his establishment being performed by an old woman, who came at an early hour of the morning, remained all day, and left at night.

There was thus no family circumstance connected with his own domestic establishment, the absence of which, on the present occasion, might have excited his suspicions as to his real position. Everything, then, favoured the unlucky chance now in progress. To resume: The doctor having placed himself in the hostile attitude already described, coolly and courageously awaited the entrance of the supposed burglar.

He had not to wait long. The door opened; and, all unconscious of what was awaiting him, Thomson entered. It was all he was allowed to do, however; for, in the next instant, a well-directed blow from the doctor's crab-stick laid him senseless on the floor.

"Take that, you burglarious villain," shouted the doctor triumphantly, on seeing the success of his assault; "and that, and that, and that," he added, plunging sundry forcible kicks into the body of his prostrate victim with the points of his little stumpy Hessians.

Having settled his man, as he imagined, the doctor stooped down, and, seizing him by the neck of his coat, proceeded to drag him to the outside of the door. This was a work of some difficulty, as Thomson was rather a heavy man; but it was accomplished. The doctor exerted himself, and succeeded in hauling the unconscious body of his unfortunate neighbour on to the landing-place on the outside. Having got him there, he edged him towards the descent, and, giving him a shove with his foot, sent him rolling down the stairs.

The housebreaker thus disposed of, and put, as the doctor believed, beyond all power of doing any more mischief in this world, the latter, highly satisfied with what he had done, and not a little vain of his prowess, re-entered the house, carefully secured the door after him with chain and bolt, and retired to the little bedroom of which he had been before in possession.

Somewhat sobered by the occurrence which had just taken place, the doctor now discovered various little circumstances which rather surprised him. He could not, for instance, find his nightcap; it was not in the place where it used to be. Neither could he find the boot-jack; it was not where it used to be either. The bed, too, he thought, had taken up a strange position;

it was not in the same corner of the room, and the head was reversed. The head of his bed used to be towards the door; he now found the foot in that direction.

All these little matters the doctor noted, and thought them rather odd; but he set them all down to the debit of his housekeeper,—some as the results of carelessness—such as the absence of the nightcap and boot-jack; others—the shifting of the bed and altering its position—to the whim of some new arrangement.

Thus satisfactorily accounting for the little omissions and discrepancies he noted, the doctor began to peel; and, in a short time after, was snugly buried beneath the blankets, with his red comforter round his head in place of a nightcap.

Leaving the doctor for a time, thus comfortably quartered, we will look after the unfortunate victim of his prowess, whose rights he was now so complacently usurping.

For fully half an hour after he had been bundled down stairs by the doctor in the way already described, poor Thomson lay without sense or motion. At about the end of that time, however, he so far recovered as to be able to emit two or three dismal groans, which happening to be overheard by the policeman on the station, who was at the moment going his rounds, he hastened towards the quarter from whence the alarming sounds proceeded, and found the ill-used cheesemonger lying at full length on the stair, head downwards, and, of course, feet uppermost.

The policeman held his lantern close to the face of the unfortunate man, to see if he could recognise him; but this he could not, and that for two reasons: First, being newly come to the station, he did not know Thomson at all; and, second, the countenance of the

latter was so covered with blood, and otherwise disfigured, that, suppose he had, he could not possibly have recognised him.

Seeing the man in a senseless state, and, as he thought, perhaps mortally injured, the policeman hastened to the office to give notice of his situation, and to procure assistance to have him carried there; all of which was speedily done. A bier was brought, and on this bier the person of the unfortunate cheesemonger was placed, and borne to the police office.

Medical aid being here afforded to the sufferer, he was soon brought so far round as to be able to give some account of himself, and of the misfortune which had befallen him. His face, too, having been cleared of the blood by which it was disguised, he was recognised by several persons in the office; and being known to be a respectable man, the wonder was greatly increased to see him in so lamentable a condition. Mr. Thomson's account, however, of the occurrences of the night explained all.

He stated that, on returning home to his own house, in which there was no one living at present but himself, he was encountered by some one in the passage, and knocked down the instant he entered the door. Who or what the person was he could not tell, but he had no doubt that it was some one who had entered the house for the purpose of robbing it; and added his belief that the house was filled with robbers, who, he had no doubt, had plundered it of every portable article worth carrying away.

How he came to be found on the stair he could not tell, but supposed that he had been dragged there after he had been knocked down—that proceeding having deprived him of all consciousness.

Here ended Mr. Thomson's deposition; and great

was the sensation, great the commotion which it excited in the police office. So daring a burglary—so daring an assault. The like had not been heard of for years. In a twinkling, eight or ten men were mustered, lanterned, and bludgeoned; and, headed by a sergeant, were on their march to the scene of robbery.

On arriving at Mr. Thomson's door, they found it fast, and all quiet within. What was to be done? Force open the door? Perhaps some of the villains were still in the house. At any rate, it was proper to see what state things were in.

A smith was accordingly sent for, the lock picked, and the door thrown open, when, headed by the sergeant with a pistol in his hand, in rushed a mob of policemen, a constellation of lanterns, a forest of bludgeons.

The guardians of the night now dispersed themselves over the house; but, to their great surprise, found no trace whatever of the thieves. There appeared to have been nothing disturbed, and the doors and windows remained all fast.

Puzzled by these circumstances, the police had begun to abate somewhat of that zeal with which they had first commenced their search, and were standing together in knots, some in one room and some in another, discussing the probabilities and likelihoods of the case, when those in the doctor's apartment were suddenly startled by a loud snore or grunt, proceeding from the bed, which was followed by a restless movement, and the exclamation—"Thieves, robbers!" muttered in the thick indistinct way of a person dreaming.

In an instant, half a dozen policemen rushed towards the bed, drew aside the curtains, and there beheld the unconscious face of the heroic little doctor just peering out of the blankets, and a section of the red comforter in which his head was entombed in the manner already

set forth. We have said that the face on which the astonished policemen now looked was an unconscious one. So it was; for, notwithstanding the grunt he had emitted, the movement he had made, and the exclamations he had uttered, the doctor was still sound asleep; the former having been merely the result of dreamy reminiscences of the past, awakened by an indistinct sense of the presence of some person or persons in the house.

In mute surprise, the police, every one holding his lantern aloft, and thus surrounding the bed with a halo of light, gazed for a second or two on the sleeping Esculapius. They had never, in the course of all their experience, seen a burglar take things so coolly and comfortably. That he should enter a house with the intention of robbing it, and should deliberately strip, go to bed, and take a snooze in that house, was a piece of such daring impudence as they had never heard of before.

It was no time, however, for making reflections on the subject. The business in hand was to secure the villain; and this was promptly done. Finding his sleep so profound as not to be easily disturbed, half a dozen men, lanterns and sticks in hand, flung themselves on the doctor, and, seizing him by the legs and arms, had him in a twinkling on the floor on the breadth of his back. Confounded and bewildered as he was by the extraordinary and appalling circumstances in which he now found himself—surrounded with what appeared to him to be a mob—lanterns flitting about as thick as the sparks on a piece of burned paper—cudgels bristling around him like a paling—and, to complete all, a clamour and hubbub of tongues that might have been heard three streets off;—we say, confounded and bewildered as he was by these

sights and sounds, the doctor's pluck did not desert him. Starting to his feet, and not doubting that he was in the midst of a mob of housebreakers, he seized one of the policemen by the throat, when a deadly struggle ensued, in which the doctor's shirt was, in a twinkling, torn up into ribbons; in another twinkling he was floored by a blow from a baton, and rendered incapable of further resistance.

The combat had been a most unequal one, and no other consequence could possibly have arisen from it.

Having knocked down the doctor, the next business, as is usual in such and similar cases, was to get him up again. Accordingly, three or four men got hold of him by the arms and shoulders, and having raised him to his feet, planted him, still senseless, in a chair.

A clamorous consultation, spoken in half a dozen different dialects, now ensued, as to how the house-breaker was to be disposed of.

"We'll teuk him to the office, to pe surely," said a hard-faced, red-whiskered Celt. "What else you'll do wi' ta roke that'll proke into shentleman's hoose, and go to ped as comfortable as a lort. Dan's impitence."

"Soul, and it's to the office we'll have him, by all manner o' means, and that in the twinkling of a bed-post," chimed in a tall raw-boned Irishman, with a spotted cotton handkerchief tied so high around the lower part of his face as to bury his mouth. "The thaif o' the world. It's a free passage across the wather he'll now get, anyhow, bad luck to him."

"Fat, tiel, would you tak the man stark naked through the street?" said a little thick-set Aberdonian. "It would be verra undecent. There's a bit cloaky there; throw that aboot his shouthers, and then we'll link him awa like a water-stoup."

"Od, ye'll no fin that so easy, I'm thinkin!" exclaimed

a lumpish, broad-shouldered young fellow. "He's as fat's a Lochrin distillery pig. He's a hantle mair like his meat than his wark, that ane."

Hitherto the unfortunate subject of these remarks had been able to take no part in what was passing; but, stupefied by the blow he had received, which had covered his face with blood, and further confounded by the various circumstances of the case—his previous debauch, the violence and suddenness of his awakening, and the extraordinary clamour and uproar that surrounded him—he sat, with drooping head and confused senses, without uttering a word.

His physical energies, however, gradually recovering a little, he began to stare about him with a look of bewilderment; and at length, fixing his eye on the Irishman, who happened to be standing directly opposite him, he addressed him with a—

"Pray, friend, what is the meaning of all this?"

"Faiks, my purty fellow, and it's yourself that might be after guessing that with your own 'cute genius," replied Paddy. "Haven't you half a notion, now, of what you have been about the same blessed night?"

"I have a pretty good notion that my house has been broken into by a parcel of ruffians," said the doctor, "and that I have been half, perhaps wholly, murdered by you."

"Capital, ould fellow; capital," said the Irishman. "Tell truth, and shame the devil. Your house! Stick to that, my jewel, and you'll astonish the spalpeens. But come, come, my tight little mannikin, get up wid ye. You'll go and have a peep of *our* house now. Time about's fair play."

And he seized the doctor, who was now wrapped in his cloak, and was forcing him from his seat, when the latter, resisting this movement, called out—

"Does no one here know me? Will no one here protect me? What am I assailed in my own house in this manner for? My name's Dobbie—Doctor Dobbie!"

"Your name's no nosin to nobody, you roke," said Duncan M'Kay, seconding the efforts of his colleague to lug the doctor out of his seat. "You'll be one names to-day and anodder names to-morrow. So shust come along to ta office, toctor—since you calls yourself a toctor—and teuket a nicht's quarters wi' some o' your frients that's there afore you."

"Let's get a grup o' him," exclaimed the broad-shouldered young fellow already spoken of, edging himself in to have a share in the honour of laying a capturing hand on the doctor. "Od, he's as round as a pokmanky. There's nae getting haud o' him. Come awa, doctor; come awa, my man. Bailie Morton 'll be unco glad to see ye," he added, having succeeded in getting hold of one of the doctor's arms, which he seized with a grip like a vice.

Undeterred by the overpowering force with which he was assailed, the doctor still resisted, vainly announcing and re-announcing his name and calling. It had the effect only of increasing the clamour and hubbub amongst the police, who now all huddled round him in a mob; and without listening to a word he said, finally succeeded in carrying him bodily out of the house, in despite of some desperate struggling, and a great deal of noisy vociferation on the part of the doctor.

THE POLICE OFFICE, AND FINALE.

Leading off from and immediately behind the public office, there was a small carpeted room, provided with a sofa, some chairs, and a writing-desk.

This room was appropriated to some of the upper functionaries connected with the police establishment of ——, and was the scene of private examinations of culprits, and of other kinds of proceedings of a private nature.

At the time at which we introduce the reader to this apartment, there lay extended on the sofa above spoken of, a gentleman who appeared to have seen some recent service, if one might judge from the circumstance of his head being bound up in a blood-stained handkerchief, and his exhibiting some symptoms of languor and debility. This gentleman was Mr. Thomson, who was awaiting the result of the expedition which had gone to examine his house, and whose return he was now momentarily expecting. Awaiting the same issue then, and awaiting it in the same apartment, was another gentleman. This person was a sort of sub-superintendent of the police; and was, at the moment of which we speak, busily engaged writing at the desk formerly mentioned.

Both of those persons, then, were anxiously waiting the return of the detachment whose proceedings are already before the reader, beguiling the time, meanwhile, by discussing the probabilities of the case. They were thus engaged, when a tremendous noise in the outer office gave intimation of an arrival, and one of no ordinary kind; for the tramping of feet was immense, and the hubbub astounding.

"That's *them*," said Mr. Thomson.

"I think it is," said the sub.

Ere any other remark could be made, the door of the private apartment was opened, and in marched a short, stout, half-dressed, bloody-faced gentleman, in a blue cloth cloak, between two policemen, and followed by a mob of functionaries of the same description, who

stood so thick as to completely block up the door. This stout, half-dressed gentleman in the blue cloth cloak was the doctor.

"Dear me, doctor," said Mr. Thomson, advancing towards the former, whom he at once recognised, "what's the matter? What terrible affair is this?"

"Terrible indeed—unheard of, monstrous!" exclaimed the doctor, in a towering passion. "My house, sir, has been broken into by these ruffians. I have been torn from my bed, maltreated in the way you see, and dragged here like a felon by them, and for what I know not. But I *will* know it; and if I don't—"

"This is odd, doctor," here interposed Mr. Thomson; "I have been the victim of a similar kind of violence to-night, as you may see by the state of my head, although the case is in other respects somewhat different. My house has been also broken into."

"Bless my soul, very strange!" said the doctor, taking a momentary interest in the misfortunes of his neighbour. "By these ruffians?" he added, pointing to the police.

"No, no, not them," replied Thomson; "house-breakers. Some villains had got into the house; and I had no sooner entered it, on returning home a little later than usual, than I was knocked down, dragged out to the stair, and thrown down, where I was found in a state of insensibility and brought here."

The doctor winced a little at this statement: a vague suspicion, we can hardly say of the fact, but of something akin thereto, began to glimmer dimly on his mental optics. He, however, said nothing; nor, even had he been inclined to say anything, was opportunity afforded him; for here the presiding official of the place, the sub-superintendent, to whom the doctor was well known, and who had impatiently awaited the conclusion

of the conversation between the latter and Thomson, interfered with a—

“Good heaven, doctor, how came you to be in this situation? What is the meaning of all this?” he added, turning to his men.

“The maining’s as plain as a pike-staff, your honour,” replied the Irish watchman, to whom we have already introduced the reader. “We found this little gentleman, since he turns out to be a gentleman, where he shouldn’t have been.”

“And where was that, pray?” inquired the sub.

“Why, in Mr. Thomson’s house, your honour. And not only that, but in bed too, as snug as a fox in a chimbley.”

“In ta fery peds, ta roke!” here chimed in our friend McKay.

“What! you don’t mean to say that you found the doctor here in *Mr. Thomson’s* house?” said the astonished official, laying a marked emphasis on the name.

“To pe surely we do, sir,” replied Duncan.

“I’ll tak my Bible oath till’t,” added another personage, whom the reader will readily recognise.

“In my house! The doctor in *my* house!” exclaimed Mr. Thomson, in the utmost amazement.

“Mr. Thomson’s house! Me in Mr. Thomson’s house!” said the doctor, with a look of blank dismay; for a tolerably distinct view of the truth had now begun to present itself to his mind’s eye. It was, therefore, rather in the desperate hope of there being yet some chance in his favour, than from any conviction that the testimony against him was founded in error, that he added—

“My *own* house, you scoundrels; you found me in my *own* house!”

Here the whole mob of policemen simultaneously, and

as if with one voice, shouted—"It's a lie, it's a lie. We found him in Mr. Thomson's."

"How do you explain this, doctor?" said Mr. Thomson mildly, although beginning—he couldn't help it—to think rather queerly of the doctor.

"Why, why," replied the crest-fallen and perplexed doctor, "if I really have been in your house, Mr. Thomson, although I can't believe it, I must, I must—in fact, I must have mistaken it for my own. To tell a truth, I came home rather cut last night; and it is possible, quite possible, although I can hardly think probable, that I may have taken your house for my own. That's the fact," added the doctor, with something like an appeal to the lenity of the person whose rights he had so unwittingly usurped, and whose corporeal substance he had so seriously maltreated.

"And was it you that knocked me down, doctor?" said Mr. Thomson. "Too bad that, to knock me down in my own house."

"Why, my dear sir, I trust I did not. I hope I did not. But really I don't know; perhaps I—you see, I thought thieves were coming in, and I—"

Here a burst of laughter from the presiding officer, which was instantly taken up by every one in the apartment, and in which Thomson himself couldn't help joining, interrupted the doctor's further explanations.

"Well, doctor," said the latter, who was a good-natured sort of person, and who, like every one else, had a kind of esteem for the little medical gentleman, "I must say that when you broke my head, you were only in the way of your trade; but I think the least thing you can do is to mend it for nothing."

"Most gladly, my dear sir," replied the doctor; "for I did the damage,—at least I fear it, however unknowingly,—and am bound to repair it."

“Done ; let it be a bargain,” said Thomson. “But, doctor, be so good as to give me previous notice when you again desire to take possession of my house. At any rate, don’t knock me down when I come to seek a share of it.”

The doctor promised to observe the conditions ; and shortly after, the two left the office, arm in arm, in the most friendly way imaginable.

It is said, although we cannot vouch for the truth of the report, that the doctor, after this, fell upon the expedient of casting a knot on his handkerchief for each landing-place in the stair as he gained it, when ascending the latter under such circumstances as those that gave rise to the awkward occurrence which has been the subject of these pages.

THE SEEKER.

AMONGST the many thousand readers of these tales, there are perhaps few who have not observed that the object of the writers is frequently of a higher kind than that of merely contributing to their amusement. They would wish "to point a moral," while they endeavour to "adorn a tale." It is with this view that I now lay before them the history of a SEEKER. The first time I remember hearing, or rather of noticing the term, was in a conversation with a living author respecting the merits of a popular poet, when, his religious opinions being adverted to, it was mentioned that, in a letter to a brother poet of equal celebrity, he described himself as a SEEKER. I was struck with the word and its application. I had never met with the fool who saith in his heart that there is no God; and though I had known many deniers of revelation, yet a SEEKER, in the sense in which the word was applied, appeared a new character. But, on reflection, I found it an epithet applicable to thousands, and adopted it as a title to our present story.

Richard Storie was the eldest son of a Dissenting minister, who had the pastoral charge of a small congregation a few miles from Hawick. His father was not what the world calls a man of talent, but he possessed what is far beyond talents—piety and humanity. In his own heart he felt his Bible to be true—its words were as a lamp within him; and from his heart he poured forth its doctrines, its hopes, and consolations,

to others, with a fervour and an earnestness which FAITH only can inspire. It is not the thunder of declamation, the pomp of eloquence, the majesty of rhetoric, the rounded period, and the glow of imagery, which can chain the listening soul, and melt down the heart of the unbeliever, as metals yield to the heat of the furnace. Show me the hoary-headed preacher, who carries sincerity in his very look and in his very tones, who is animated because faith inspires him, and out of the fulness of his own heart his mouth speaketh, and there is the man from whose tongue truth floweth as from the lips of an apostle ; and the small still voice of conscience echoes to his words, while hope burns, and the judgment becomes convinced. Where faith is not in the preacher, none will be produced in the hearer. Such a man was the father of Richard Storie. He had fulfilled his vows, and prayed with and for his children. He set before them the example of a Christian parent, and he rejoiced to perceive that that example was not lost upon them.

We pass over the earlier years of Richard Storie, as during that period he had not become a SEEKER, nor did he differ from other children of his age. There was indeed a thoughtfulness and sensibility about his character ; but these were by no means so remarkable as to require particular notice, nor did they mark his boyhood in a peculiar degree. The truths which from his childhood he had been accustomed to hear from his father's lips, he had never doubted ; but he felt their truth as he felt his father's love, for both had been imparted to him together. He had fixed upon the profession of a surgeon, and at the age of eighteen he was sent to Edinburgh to attend the classes. He was a zealous student, and his progress realized the fondest wishes and anticipations of his parent. It was during

his second session that Richard was induced, by some of his fellow collegians, to become a member of a debating society. It was composed of many bold and ambitious young men, who, in the confidence of their hearts, rashly dared to meddle with things too high for them. There were many amongst them who regarded it as a proof of manliness to avow their scepticism, and who gloried in scoffing at the eternal truths which had lighted the souls of their fathers when the darkness of death fell upon their eyelids. It is one of the besetting sins of youth to appear wise above what is written. There were many such amongst those with whom Richard Storie now associated. From them he first heard the truths which had been poured into his infant ear from his father's lips attacked, and the tongue of the scoffer rail against them. His first feeling was horror, and he shuddered at the impiety of his friends. He rose to combat their objections and refute their arguments, but he withdrew not from the society of the wicked. Week succeeded week, and he became a leading member of the club. He was no longer filled with horror at the bold assertions of the avowed sceptic, nor did he manifest disgust at the ribald jest. As night silently and imperceptibly creeps through the air, deepening shade on shade, till the earth lies buried in its darkness, so had the gloom of *Doubt* crept over his mind, deepening and darkening, till his soul was bewildered in the sunless darkness.

The members acted as chairman of the society in rotation, and, in his turn, the office fell upon Richard Storie. For the first time, he seemed to feel conscious of the darkness in which his spirit was enveloped; conscience haunted him as a hound followeth its prey; and still its small still voice whispered,

“Who sitteth in the scorner's chair.”

The words seemed burning on his memory. He tried to forget them, to chase them away—to speak of, to listen to other things; but he could not. “*Who sitteth in the scorner’s chair*” rose upon his mind as if printed before him—as if he heard the words from his father’s tongue—as though they would rise to his own lips. He was troubled—his conscience smote him—the darkness in which his soul was shrouded was made visible. He left his companions—he hastened to his lodgings, and wept. But his tears brought not back the light which had been extinguished within him, nor restored the hopes which the pride and the rashness of reason had destroyed. He had become the willing prisoner of *Doubt*, and it now held him in its cold and iron grasp, struggling in despair.

Reason, or rather the self-sufficient arrogance of fancied talent which frequently assumes its name, endeavoured to suppress the whisperings of conscience in his breast; and in such a state of mind was Richard Storie, when he was summoned to attend the deathbed of his father. It was winter, and the snow lay deep on the ground, and there was no conveyance to Hawick until the following day; but, ere the morrow came, eternity might be between him and his parent. He had wandered from the doctrines that parent had taught, but no blight had yet fallen on the affections of his heart. He hurried forth on foot; and having travelled all night in sorrow and anxiety, before day-break he arrived at the home of his infancy. Two of the elders of the congregation stood before the door.

“Ye are just in time, Mr. Richard,” said one of them mournfully, “for he’ll no be lang now; and he has prayed earnestly that he might only be spared till ye arrived.”

Richard wept aloud.

"Oh, try and compose yoursel', dear sir," said the elder. "Your distress may break the peace with which he's like to pass away. It's a sair trial, nae doubt—a visitation to us a'; but ye ken, Richard, we must not mourn as those who have no hope."

"Hope!" groaned the agonized son as he entered the house. He went towards the room where his father lay; his mother and his brethren sat weeping around the bed.

"Richard!" said his afflicted mother as she rose and flung her arms around his neck. The dying man heard the name of his first-born, his languid eyes brightened, he endeavoured to raise himself upon his pillow, he stretched forth his feeble hand. "Richard!—my own Richard!" he exclaimed; "ye hae come, my son; my prayer is heard, and I can die in peace! I longed to see ye, for my spirit was troubled upon yer account—sore and sadly troubled; for there were expressions in yer last letter that made me tremble—that made me fear that the pride o' human learning was lifting up the heart o' my bairn, and leading his judgment into the dark paths o' error and unbelief; but oh! these tears are not the tears of an unbeliever!"

He sank back exhausted. Richard trembled. He again raised his head.

"Get the books," said he feebly, "and Richard will make worship. It is the last time we shall all join together in praise on this earth, and it will be the last time I shall hear the voice o' my bairn in prayer, and it is long since I heard it. Sing the hymn,

'The hour of my departure's come,'

and read the twenty-third psalm."

Richard did as his dying parent requested; and as he knelt by the bedside, and lifted up his voice in

prayer, his conscience smote him, agony pierced his soul, and his tongue faltered. He now became a Seeker, seeking mercy and truth at the same moment ; and, in the agitation of his spirit, his secret thoughts were revealed, his doubts were manifested ! A deep groan issued from the dying-bed. The voice of the supplicant failed him—his *amen* died upon his lips ; he started to his feet in confusion.

“My son ! my son !” feebly cried the dying man, “ye hae lifted yer eyes to the mountains o’ vanity, and the pride o’ reason has darkened yer heart, but, as yet, it has not hardened it. Oh Richard ! remember the last words o’ yer dying faither : ‘Seek, and ye shall find.’ Pray with an humble and a contrite heart, and in yer last hour ye will hae, as I hae now, a licht to guide ye through the dark valley of the shadow of death.”

He called his wife and his other children around him—he blessed them—he strove to comfort them—he committed them to his care who is the Husband of the widow and the Father of the fatherless. The lustre that lighted up his eyes for a moment, as he besought a blessing on them, vanished away, his head sank back upon his pillow, a low moan was heard, and his spirit passed into peace.

His father’s death threw a blight upon the prospects of Richard. He no longer possessed the means of prosecuting his studies ; and in order to support himself and assist his mother, he engaged himself as tutor in the family of a gentleman in East Lothian. But there his doubts followed him, and melancholy sat upon his breast. He had thoughtlessly, almost imperceptibly, stepped into the gloomy paths of unbelief, and anxiously he groped to retrace his steps ; but it was as a blind man stumbles ; and in wading through the maze of controversy for a

guide, his way became more intricate, and the darkness of his mind more intense. He repented that he had ever listened to the words of the scoffer, or sat in the chair of the scorner; but he had permitted the cold mists of scepticism to gather round his mind, till even the affections of his heart became blighted by their influence. He was now a solitary man, shunning society; and at those hours when his pupils were not under his charge, he would wander alone in the wood or by the river, brooding over unutterable thoughts, and communing with despair; for he sought not, as is the manner of many, to instil the poison that had destroyed his own peace into the minds of others. He carried his punishment in his soul, and was silent—in the soul that was doubting its own existence! Of all hypochondriacs, to me the unbeliever seems the most absurd. For can matter think? can it reason, can it doubt? Is it not the thing that doubts which distrusts its own being? Often when he so wandered, the last words of his father—"Seek, and ye shall find"—were whispered in his heart, as though the spirit of the departed breathed them over him. Then would he raise his hands in agony, and his prayer rose from the solitude of the woods.

After acting about two years as tutor, he returned to Edinburgh and completed his studies. Having with difficulty, from the scantiness of his means, obtained his diplomas, he commenced practice in his native village. His brothers and his sisters had arrived at manhood and womanhood, and his mother enjoyed a small annuity. Almost from boyhood he had been deeply attached to Agnes Brown, the daughter of a neighbouring farmer; and about three years after he had commenced practice, she bestowed on him her hand. She was all that his heart could wish—meek, gentle, and affectionate; and her anxious love threw a

gleam of sunshine over the melancholy that had settled upon his soul. Often, when he fondly gazed in her eyes, where affection beamed, the hope of immortality would flash through his bosom; for one so good, so made of all that renders virtue dear, but to be born to die and to be no more, he deemed impossible. They had been married about nine years, and Agnes had become the mother of five fair children, when in one day death entered their dwelling, and robbed them of two of their little ones. The neighbours had gathered together to comfort them, and the mother in silent anguish wept over her babes; but the father stood tearless and stricken with grief, as though his hopes were sealed up in the coffin of his children. In his agony he uttered words of strange meaning. The doubts of the Seeker burst forth in the accents of despair. The neighbours gazed at each other. They had before had doubts of the religious principles of Dr. Storie; now those doubts were confirmed. Many began to regard him as an unsafe man to visit a death-bed, where he might attempt to rob the dying of the everlasting hope which enables them to triumph over the last enemy. His practice fell off, and the wants of his family increased. He was no longer able to maintain an appearance of respectability. His circumstances aggravated the gloom of his mind; and for a time he became, not a Seeker, but one who abandoned himself to callousness and despair. Even the affection of his wife—which knew no change, but rather increased as affliction and misfortune came upon them—with the smiles and affection of his children, became irksome. Their love increased his misery. His own house was all but forsaken, and the blacksmith's shop became his consulting room, the village alehouse his laboratory. Misery and contempt heightened the

"shadows, clouds, and darkness" which rested on his mind. To his anguish and excitement he had now added habits of intemperance; his health became a wreck, and he sank upon his bed, a miserable and a ruined man. The shadow of death seemed lowering over him, and he lay trembling, shrinking from its approach, shuddering and brooding over the cheerless, the horrible thought—*annihilation!* But, even then, his poor Agnes watched over him with a love stronger than death. She strove to cheer him with the thought that he would still live—that they would again be happy. "Oh my husband!" cried she fondly, "yield not to despair; *seek, and ye shall find!*"

"Oh heavens, Agnes!" exclaimed he, "I have sought!—I have sought! I have been a SEEKER until now; but Truth flees from me, Hope mocks me, and the terrors of Death only find me!"

"Kneel with me, my children," she cried; "let us pray for mercy and peace of mind for your poor father!" And the fond wife and her offspring knelt around the bed where her husband lay. A gleam of joy passed over the sick man's countenance, as the voice of her supplication rose upon his ear, and a ray of hope fell upon his heart. "*Amen!*" he uttered as she arose; and "*Amen!*" responded their children.

On the bed of sickness his heart had been humbled; he had, as it were, seen death face to face; and the nearer it approached, the stronger assurances did he feel of the immortality he had dared to doubt. He arose from his bed a new man; hope illumined, and faith began to glow in his bosom. His doubts were vanquished, his fears dispelled. He had sought, and at length found the hopes of the Christian.

THE SURGEON'S TALES.

THE WAGER.*

ABOUT thirty years ago, the office of carrier between Edinburgh and a certain town on the north of the Tay was discharged by a person of the name of George Skirving. At the time of which we speak he might be about forty-five years of age, a man of considerable physical strength, and with as much mental firmness as will be found among the generality of mankind. His occupation, in travelling during night, required often the confirming influence of personal courage, to keep him from being alarmed; and his activity, and exposure to the fresh air of both land and water, were conducive to bodily health and elasticity of spirits. He was at once a faithful carrier and a good companion on the road, along which he was generally respected; and, by attention to business and economical habits of living, he had been enabled to realize as much money as might suffice to sustain him, with his wife and three children, in the event of his being disabled, by accident or ill health, from following his ordinary employment.

The day in which George Skirving left the northern town for Edinburgh, was Wednesday of each week; and he started at the hour of seven, both in winter and summer. On one occasion, in the month of August, he set out from his quarters at his usual hour; and having crossed the Tay with his goods, proceeded on his way

* This strange tale is given from materials supplied by the Surgeon with whom I was brought up.

through Fife. He had with him his dog Wolf, who usually served him as a companion ; his waggons were loaded with goods, the proceeds of the carriage of which he counted as he trudged along ; and he now and then had recourse to a small flask of spirits which his wife had, without his knowledge, and contrary to her usual custom, placed in the breast-pocket of his great-coat. He was thus in good spirits ; and as he applied himself with great moderation—for he was a sober man—to his inspiring companion, he jocularly blamed Betty (such was the name of his consort) for defrauding his houses of call on the road of the custom he used to bestow on them.

“It was kind o’ ye, Betty,” he said ; “but it saves naething ; for if I, wha have travelled this road for sae mony years, were to pass John Sharpe’s, or Widow M’Murdo’s, or Andrew Gemmel’s, without takin’ my usual allowance, I would be set down as fey or mad. I maun gae through a’ my usual routine—mak my ca’s, order my drams, drink them, and pay for them, as I hae dune for twenty years. Men are just like clocks—some gae owre fast, and some owre slow ; but the carrier, beyond a’, maun keep to his time aye, and *chap* at the proper time and place, or idleness and beggary would soon mak time hang weary on his hands.”

He had trudged onwards in his slow pace for a space of about eight miles, and was at the distance of about three from Cupar, when he was accosted by a person of the name of James Cowie, an inhabitant of Dundee, with whom he had for a long time been in habits of intimacy.

“You are weel forward the day, George,” said Cowie. “Ye’ll be in Cupar before your time. There’s rowth a parcels for ye at John Sharpe’s door, yonder. But, mercy on me !” he continued, starting and looking amazed, “what’s the matter wi’ ye, man ?”

"Naething," replied George. "I hae been takin' a few draps o' Betty's cordial, here," pointing to the flask, "and maybe the colour may have mounted to my face."

"The colour mounted to your face, man!" ejaculated Cowie. "Is it whiteness—paleness—ye mean by colour? Ye're like a clout, man—a bleached clout. There's something wrang, rely upon it, George; some o' that intricate machinery o' our fearfu' systems out o' joint. Is it possible ye have felt or feel nae change?"

"Nane whatever, Jamie," answered the carrier, somewhat alarmed. "You're surely joking me; I never felt better i' my life. No, no, Jamie, there's naething the matter; thank God, I'm in gude health."

"It's weel ye think sae," replied Cowie, with a satirical tone; "but if I'm no cheated, ye're on the brink o' some fearfu' disease. Get up on your cart, man; hasten to Cupar, an' speak to Doctor Lowrie. It's a braw thing to tak diseases in time."

"If a white face is a' ye judge by," said George, attempting to make light of the matter, "I can remove it by an application to Betty's cordial."

"Ay, do that," said Cowie ironically, "and add fuel to the flame. If I werena your friend, I wadna tak this liberty wi' ye. I assure ye again, an' I hae some judgment o' thae matters, that ye're very ill. That's no an ordinary paleness: your lips are blue, an' your eyes dull an' heavy—sure signs o' an oncome. Haste ye to Cupar an' get advice, an' ye may yet ca' me your best friend."

As he finished these words, Cowie turned to proceed onwards towards Newport.

"Ye've either said owre little or owre muckle, James," replied George, after a slight pause, and resigning his carelessness.

"I hae just said the truth, George," added Cowie;

“but I maun be in Dundee by one o’clock, an’ canna wait. I’ll say naething to Mrs. Skirving to alarm her; but, for God’s sake, tak my advice, an’ consult Doctor Lowrie.”

He proceeded on his journey, leaving Skirving in doubt and perplexity. At first he was considerably affected by Cowie’s speech and manner, because he knew him to be a serious man, and averse to all manner of joking. It was possible, he admitted, that a disease might be lurking secretly in his vitals, unknown to himself, but discernible to another; and the circumstance of his wife having put the flask of cordial in his coat-pocket, seemed to indicate that she had observed something wrong before he set out, and had been afraid to communicate it to him, in case it might alarm him. His spirits sank, as this confirmation of Cowie’s statement came to his mind; he put his right hand to his left wrist, to feel the state of the pulse, and, as might have been expected, discovered (for he overlooked the effects of his fear) that it was much quicker than it used to be when he was in perfect health.

Having been taken thus by surprise, he remained in a state of considerable depression for some time; but when he came to think of the inadequate grounds of his alarm, he began to rally; and his mind, rebounding, as it were, on the cessation of the depressing reverie, threw off the fear, and he recovered so far his natural courage as to laugh at the strange fancy that had taken possession of him.

“I was a fule,” he said to himself. “What though my face be pale, and my eyes heavy, and my pulse a little quicker than usual, am I to dee for a’ that? Cowie has probably had his *morning*; and truly his appearance, now when I think of it, didna assort ill wi’ that supposition. Johnny Sharpe and he are auld

cronies, and they couldna part without some wet pledge o' their auld friendship. I'll wad my best horse on the point. Ha! ha! what a fule I was!" He accompanied these words by again feeling his pulse. The fear was greatly off, the pulsations had become more regular; and this confirmation enabled him to laugh off the effects the extraordinary announcements had made upon him.

He proceeded onwards to Cupar, and stopped at John Sharpe's inn. The landlord was at the door. George looked at him narrowly, as he saluted him in the ordinary form. He thought the innkeeper looked also very narrowly at him, as he answered his salutation; but he was afraid to broach the question of his sickly appearance, and hurried away to get the goods packed that stood at the inn door. Having finished his work, during which he thought he saw the landlord looking strangely at him, he called for the quantity of spirits he was usually in the habit of getting, and, as he filled out the glass, asked quickly if James Cowie had been there that morning. The landlord answered that he had; but added, of his own accord, that he did not remain in the house so long as to give time for even drinking to each other. This answer produced a greater effect upon George than he was even then aware of; and it is not unlikely that this, and the impression that the landlord looked at him *strangely*, produced the very paleness that Cowie had mentioned. Be that as it may, he took up the glass of spirits and laid it down again, without almost tasting it; and his reason for this departure from his ordinary course, was, that he had already partaken sufficiently of his wife's cordial; and he had some strange misgivings about drinking ardent spirits, in case, after all, it might turn out that there was hanging about him

some disease. The moment he laid down the full glass, the landlord said to him, looking in an inquiring and sympathetic manner into his face—

“George, I haena seen you do that for ten years. Are you well enough?”

“What! what! eh, what!” stammered out the carrier confusedly; “do you think I’m ill, John?”

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the inn bell rang, and the landlord was called away, and, being otherwise occupied, did not return. After waiting for him a considerable time, Skirving became impatient, and, making another effort to shake off his fears, applied the whip to his horses, and proceeded on his journey. For a time his mind was so much confused that he could not contemplate the whole import of the extraordinary coincidence he had just witnessed; but as he proceeded and came to a quieter part of the road, his thoughts reverted to the statements of James Cowie—who, he was now satisfied, had been quite sober—to the looks and extraordinary question of John Sharpe, and to the intention of his wife in providing him with the cordial. As he pondered on this strange accumulation of according facts, he again felt his pulse, which had again risen to the height it had attained during the prior paroxysm. The affair had now assumed a new aspect. It was impossible that this concurrence of circumstances could be fortuitous. He was now much afraid that he was ill—very ill indeed; perhaps under the incipient symptoms of typhus or brain fever, or small-pox, or some other dreadful disease. As these thoughts rose in his mind, he grew faint, and would have sat down; but he felt a reluctance to stop his carts, and a feeling of shame struggled against his conviction, and kept him walking.

This state of nervous excitement remained, in spite

of many efforts he made to throw off his fears. Yet he was bound to admit that he felt no symptoms of pain or sickness. By and by the feeling of alarm began again to decay, and by the time he got eight or ten miles farther on his road, he had conjured up a good many sustaining ideas and arguments, whereby he at least contrived to increase the quantum of *doubt* of his being really ill. He rallied a little again; but the temporary elevation was destined to be succeeded by another depression, which, in its turn, gave place to another accession of relief; and thus he was kept in a painful alternation of changing fancies, until he was within a mile and a half of the next place of call—a little house at some distance from the Plasterers' Inn.

He had hitherto been progressing at a very slow rate, and was in the act of raising his hand to apply the whip to his horses, when he saw before him Archibald Willison, a sort of itinerant cloth merchant, a native of Dundee, with whom he was on terms of intimacy. They had met often on the road, and had gossiped together over a little refreshment at the inns where the carrier stopped. At this particular time, George Skirving would rather have avoided his old friend; for he was under a depression of spirits, and felt also a disinclination or fear, he could not account for, to submit his face and appearance to the lynx eye of the travelling merchant. He had, however, no choice.

"Ah, George," cried Archie, "it's lang since I saw ye. How are ye? What!"—starting as if surprised—"have ye been lyin', man—confined—sick?—what, in God's name, has been the matter wi' ye? Some sad complaint, surely, to produce so mighty a change!"

This address seemed to George just the very confir-

mation he now required to make him perfectly satisfied of his danger. It was too much for him to hear and suffer. Staggering back, he leant upon the side of his cart, and drew breath with difficulty, attempting in vain to give his friend some reply.

"It's wrang in ye, man," continued Archie, as he saw the carrier labouring to find words to reply to him—"it's wrang in ye, George, to be here in that state o' body. How did Betty permit it? Wha wad guarantee your no lyin' down an' deein' by the road-side? I'm sure I wadna undertake the suretyship."

"I have not been a day confined, Archie," said George, as he slightly recovered from the shock caused by the announcement. "I have not been ill; and left home this morning in my usual health."

"Good God!" ejaculated Archie, "is that possible? Then is it sae muckle the waur. I thought it had been a' owre wi' ye—that ye had been ill, an' partly recovered; but now I see the disease is only coonin' yet. How 'deadly pale ye are, man; an' what a strange colour there is on your lips, round the sockets o' your een, an' the edges o' your nostrils!"

"I hae been told that the day already, Archie," said George; "I fear there's some truth in't. Yet I feel nae pain; I'm only weak an' nervous."

"Ah, ye ken little about fevers o' the putrid kind—typhus, an' the like," continued the other,—“when ye think they show themselves by ordinary symptoms. I had a cousin who died o' typhus last week; an' he looked, when he took it, just as ye look, an' spoke just as ye speak. Tak the advice o' a friend, George. Dinna stop at Widow M'Murdo's; ye can get nae advice there; hurry on to Edinburgh, and apply immediately, on your arrival, to a doctor o' repute. I assure ye a' his skill will be required."

After some conversation, all tending to the same effect, Willison parted from him, continuing his route to Cupar. All the doubt that had existed in the mind of the victim was now removed, and a settled conviction took hold of him that he was on the very eve of falling into some terrible illness. A train of gloomy fancies took possession of his mind, and he pictured himself lying extended on a bed of sickness, with the angel of death hanging over him, and an awakened conscience within, wringing him with its agonizing tortures. The nature of the disease which impended over him—the putrid typhus—was fixed, and put beyond doubt; and all the cases he had known of individuals who had died of that disease were brought before the eye of his imagination, to feed the appetite for horrors, which now began to crave food. He endeavoured to analyze his sensations, and discovered, what he never felt before, a hard, fluttering palpitation at his heart, a difficulty of breathing, weakness, trembling of the limbs, and other clear indications of the oncoming attack of a fatal disease.

Moving slowly forward, under the load of these thoughts, he arrived at Widow M'Murdo's, where he fed his horses. He was silent and gloomy; and the fear under which he laboured produced a *real* appearance of illness, which soon struck the eye of the kind dame.

“What ails ye?” asked she kindly; and ran and brought out her bottle of cordial, to administer to him that universal medicine. But her question was enough. Moody and miserable, he paid little attention to her kindness, and departed for Kirkealdy. Under the same load of despondency and apprehension, he arrived at Andrew Gemmel's, where it was his practice to remain all night. He exhibited the appearance of a

person labouring under some grievous misfortune; and deputing the feeding of his horses to the ostler, he seemed to be careless whether justice was done to them or not. The landlord noticed the change that had taken place upon him. "What ails ye, George?" was asked repeatedly; and the death-like import of the question prevented him from giving any satisfactory answer. Long before his usual period, he retired to his bed, where he passed a night of fevered dreams, restlessness, and misery.

In the morning, he was still under the operation of his apprehension, and was unable to take any breakfast. The ostler managed for him all the details of his business, and he departed in the same gloomy mood for Pettycur. Sauntering along at a slow pace, he met, half-way between the two towns, Duncan Paterson, a Dundee weaver, an old acquaintance, by whom he was hailed in the ordinary form of salutation. But he wished to proceed without standing to speak to his old friend; for he was so sorely depressed, and was so much afraid of another fearful announcement about his sickly appearance, that he could not bear an interview. This strange conduct seemed to rouse the curiosity of his friend, who, running up to him, held forth his hand, crying out—

"Ha! George, man!—this is no like you, to pass auld friends. What ails ye, man?"

"I dinna feel altogether weel," answered the carrier in a mournful tone.

"I saw that, man, lang before ye cam up," replied the other; "and it was just because ye were looking so grievously ill, that I was determined to speak to ye. When were ye seized?"

"I was weel when I left the north, yesterday morning; but I hadna been lang on the road, when I began

to gie tokens o' illness," replied the carrier mournfully, and with a drooping head.

"If I had met you in that waefu' state," said the other, "with that death-like face and unnatural-like look, I wadna have allowed ye to proceed a mile farther; but now since ye're sae far on the road, it's just as weel that ye hurry on to Edinburgh, whaur ye'll get the best advice. What symptoms do ye feel?"

"I'm heavy and dull," replied George; "my pulse rises and fa's, my heart throbs, and my legs hae been shakin' under me, as if I were palsied."

"Ah, George, George! these are a' clear signs o' typhus, man," replied Paterson. "My mother died o't. I watched, wi' filial care and affection, a' her maist minute symptoms. They were just yours. I'm vexed for ye; but maybe the hand o' a skilfu' doctor may avert the usual fatal issue."

"Was yer mither lang ill?" asked George in a low tone.

"Nine days," answered Paterson. "By the seventh she was spotted like a leopard, on the eighth she went mad, and the ninth put an end to her sufferings."

"Ay, ay," muttered George, with a deep sigh.

"But the power o' medicine's great," rejoined Paterson. "Lose nae time, after ye arrive in Edinburgh, in applying to a doctor. Mind my words."

And Paterson, casting upon him a look suited to the parting statement, left the carrier, and proceeded on his way. The victim, now completely immersed in melancholy, progressed slowly onwards to Pettycur. His downcast appearance attracted there the attention of the people who assisted him in the discharge of his business. The question, "What ails ye, George?" was repeated, and answered by silence and a sorrowful look. In the boat in which he crossed the Forth, his unusual

sadness was also noticed by the captain and crew, with whom he was intimately acquainted. As he sat in the fore-part of the vessel, silent and gloomy, they repeated the dreadful question—"What ails ye, George?"—that had been so often before put to him. To some he said he felt unwell, to others he replied by a melancholy stare, and relapsed again into his melancholy.

When he arrived at Leith, he was assisted, according to custom, by porters, in getting his goods disembarked. The men were not long in noticing the great change that had taken place upon his spirits. "What ails ye, George?" was the uniform question; and every time it was put it went to his heart, for it showed more and more, as he thought, his sick-like appearance, which seemed to escape the eyes of no one. The men assisted him more assiduously than they had ever done before; and having got everything ready, he proceeded up Leith Walk. The toll-man noticed also his dejected appearance, and the same question was put by him. He proceeded to his quarters, and, committing his carts to a man that was in the habit of assisting him, he went into the house and threw himself into a chair. "What ails ye, George?" exclaimed Widow Gilmour, as she saw him exhibiting these indications of illness. He said he felt unwell, and, rising, went away up to his bedroom, where he retired to bed.

The torture of mind to which he had been exposed for a day and a night, and a part of another day, with the want of food, and the exercise of his trade, had operated so powerfully on his body, that he was now in reality in a fever. The landlady felt his pulse, and, becoming alarmed, sent for a doctor, a young man, who immediately bled him to a much greater extent than was necessary; but the statements of George himself, and the fevered appearance he presented, convinced the

young doctor that nothing but copious bleeding would overcome the disease. The application of the lancet stamped the whole affair with the character of reality ; and the sick man, still overcome by gloomy anticipations, was soon in the very height of a dangerous fever. Two days afterwards, his wife was sent for ; but the poor man got gradually worse, and, notwithstanding all the efforts of the doctor, was soon pronounced to be in a state of imminent danger. One day James Cowie called at the house, and inquired, in a flurried manner, how George Skirving was.

"He is sae ill that I hae very little hope o' him," said Mrs. Skirving.

"Good God !" replied the man, "is it possible ? I have murdered him." And he groaned in distress.

"What do ye mean, James ?"

"Six o' us wagered, three against three, and twa to ane," he proceeded, "that our side wadna put your husband to his bed. We met him in Fife at different places o' the road, and terrified him, by describing his looks, into an opinion that he was unwell. I'm come to make amends. What is the £10 to me when the life o' a fellow-creature is at jeopardy ?"

It was too late. We need say no more. The communication was made to the sick man ; but he was too far gone to recover, and died in a few days afterwards. This is a true tale, and requires little more explanation. It may have been gathered from our narrative, that Cowie, Willison, and Paterson were the only persons who were in the plot. John Sharpe, Widow M'Murdo, Andrew Gemmel, and the others who merely noticed his dejection, were entirely ignorant of the cruel purpose.

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WILSON'S
TALES OF THE BORDERS,
AND OF SCOTLAND.

UPS AND DOWNS;

OR, DAVID STUART'S ACCOUNT OF HIS PILGRIMAGE.

OLD David Stuart was the picture of health—a personification of contentment. When I knew him, his years must have considerably exceeded threescore; but his good-natured face was as ruddy as health could make it; his hair, though mingled with grey, was as thick and strong as if he had been but twenty; his person was still muscular and active; and, moreover, he yet retained, in all their freshness, the feelings of his youth, and no small portion of the simplicity of his childhood. I loved David, not only because he was a good man, but because there was a great deal of *character* or *originality* about him; and though his brow was cheerful, the clouds of sorrow had frequently rested upon it. More than once when seated by his parlour fire, and when he had finished his pipe, and his afternoon tumbler stood on the table beside him, I have heard him give the following account of the ups and downs—the trials, the joys, and sorrows—which he had encountered in his worldly pilgrimage; and, to preserve the interest of the history, I shall give it in David's own idiom, and in his own words.

“I ne’er was a great traveller,” David was wont to begin: “through the length o’ Edinburgh, and as far south as Newcastle, is a’ that my legs ken about geography. But I’ve had a good deal o’ crooks and thraws, and ups and downs, in the world for a’ that. My faither was in the droving line, and lived in the parish o’ Coldstream. He did a good deal o’ business, baith about the fairs on the Borders, at Edinburgh market every week, and sometimes at Morpeth. He was a bachelor till he was five-and-forty, and he had a very decent lass keep’d his house, they ca’d Kirsty Simson. Kirsty was a remarkably weel-faur’d woman, and a number o’ the farm lads round about used to come and see her, as weel as trades’ chields frae about Coldstream and Birgham—no that she gied them ony encouragement, but that it was her misfortune to hae a gude-looking face. So, there was ae night that my faither cam’ hame frae Edinburgh, and, according to his custom, he had a drap in his e’e—yet no sae meikle but that he could see a lad or twa lingin’ about the house. He was very angry; and, ‘Kirsty,’ said he, ‘I dinna like thae youngsters to come about the house.’

“‘I’m sure, sir,’ said she, ‘I dinna encourage them.’

“‘Weel, Kirsty,’ said he, ‘if that’s the way, if ye hae nae objections, I’ll marry ye mysel’.

“‘I dinna see what objections I should hae,’ said she, and, without ony mair courtship, in a week or twa they were married; and, in course o’ time, I was born. I was sent to school when I was about eight years auld, but my education ne’er got far’er than the rule o’ three. Before I was fifteen, I assisted my faither at the markets, and in a short time he could trust me to buy and sell. There was one very dark night in the month o’ January, when I was little mair than seven-

teen, my faither and me were gaun to Morpeth, and we were wishing to get forward wi' the beasts as far as Whittingham; but just as we were about half a mile down the loanin' frae Glanton, it cam' awa ane o' the dreadfu'est storms that e'er mortal was out in. The snaw literally fell in a solid mass, and every now and then the wind cam' roarin' and howlin' frae the hills, and the fury o' the drift was terrible. I was driven stupid and half suffocated. My faither was on a strong mare, and I was on a bit powney; and amang the cattle there was a camstairy three-year-auld bull, that wad neither hup nor drive. We had it tied by the fore-leg and the horns; but the moment the drift broke ower us, the creature grew perfectly unmanageable; forward it wadna gang. My faither had strucken at it, when the mad animal plunged its horns into the side o' the mare, and he fell to the ground. I could just see what had happened, and that was a'. I jumped aff the powney, and ran forward. 'O faither!' says I, 'ye're no hurt, are ye?' He was trying to rise, but before I could reach him—indeed, before I had the words weel out o' my mouth—the animal made a drive at him! 'O Davy!' he cried, and he ne'er spak mair! We generally carried pistols, and I had presence o' mind to draw ane out o' the breast-pocket o' my big coat, and shoot the animal dead on the spot. I tried to raise my faither in my arms, and, dark as it was, I could see his blood upon the snaw—and a dreadfu' sight it was for a son to see! I couldna see where he had been hurt; and still, though he groaned but once, I didna think he was dead, and I strove and strove again to lift him upon the back o' the powney, and take him back to Glanton; but though I fought wi' my heart like to burst a' the time, I couldna accomplish it. 'Oh, what shall I do?' said I, and cried and

shouted for help—for the snaw fell sae fast, and the drift was sae terrible, that I was feared that, even if he werena dead, he wad be smothered and buried up before I could ride to Glanton and back. And, as I cried, our poor dog Rover came couring to my faither's body and licked his hand, and its pitiful howls mingled wi' the shrieks o' the wind. No kennin' what to do, I lifted my faither to the side o' the road, and tried to place him, half sitting like, wi' his back to the drift, by the foot o' the hedge. 'Oh, watch there, Rover,' said I; and the poor dog ran yowlin' to his feet, and did as I desired it. I sprang upon the back o' the powney, and flew up to the town. Within five minutes I was back, and in a short time a number o' folk wi' lights cam' to our assistance. My faither was covered wi' blood, but without the least sign o' life. I thought my heart wad break, and for a time my screams were heard aboon the ragin' o' the storm. My faither was conveyed up to the inn, and, on being stripped, it was found that the horn o' the animal had entered his back below the left shouther; and when a doctor frae Alnwick saw the body next day, he said he must have died instantly—and, as I have told ye, he never spoke, but just cried, 'O Davy!'

"My feelings were in such a state that I couldna write mysel', and I got a minister to send a letter to my mother, puir woman, stating what had happened. An acquaintance o' my faither's looked after the cattle, and disposed o' them at Morpeth; and I, having hired a hearse at Alnwick, got the body o' my faither taen hame. * A sorrowfu' hame-gaun it was, ye may weel think. Before ever we reached the house, I heard the shrieks o' my puir mither. 'O my faitherless bairn!' she cried, as I entered the door; but before she could rise to meet me, she got a glent o' the coffin which

they were takin' out o' the hearse, and utterin' a sudden scream, her head fell back, and she gaed clean awa.

"After my faither's funeral, we found that he had died worth only about four hundred pounds when his debts were paid; and as I had been bred in the droving line, though I was rather young, I just continued it, and my mother and me kept house thegither.

"This was the only thing particular that happened to me for the next thirteen years, or till I was thirty. My mother still kept the house, and I had nae thoughts o' marrying: no but that I had gallanted a wee bit wi' the lasses now and then, but it was naething serious, and was only to be neighbour-like. I had ne'er seen ane that I could think o' takin' for better for warse; and, anither thing, if I had seen ane to please me, I didna think my mother would be comfortable wi' a young wife in the house. Weel, ye see, as I was telling ye, things passed on in this way till I was thirty, when a respectable flesher in Edinburgh that I did a good deal o' business wi', and that had just got married, says to me in the Grassmarket ae day: 'Davy,' says he, 'ye're no gaun out o' the toun the night—will ye come and tak' tea and supper wi' the wife and me, and a freend or twa?'

"'I dinna care though I do,' says I; 'but I'm no just in a tea-drinkin' dress.'

"'Ne'er mind the dress,' says he. So, at the hour appointed, I stepped awa ower to Hanover Street, in the New Town, where he lived, and was shown into a fine carpeted room, wi' a great looking-glass, in a gilt frame, ower the chimley-piece—ye could see yoursel' at full length in't the moment you entered the door. I was confounded at the carpets and the glass, and a sofa, nae less; and, thinks I, 'This shows what kind o' bargains ye get frae me.' There were three or four

leddies sitting in the room ; and ‘Mr. Stuart, leddies,’ said the flesher ; ‘Mr. Stuart, Mrs. So-and-so,’ said he again—‘Miss Murray, Mr. Stuart.’ I was like to drap at the impudence o’ the creatur—he handed me about as if I had been a bairn at a dancin’ school. ‘Your servant, leddies,’ said I ; and didna ken where to look, when I got a glimpse o’ my face in the glass, and saw it was as red as crimson. But I was mair than ever put about when the tea was brought in, and the creatur says to me, ‘Mr. Stuart, will you assist the leddies?’ ‘Confound him,’ thought I, ‘has he brought me here to mak’ a fule o’ me!’ I did attempt to hand round the tea and toast, when, wi’ downright confusion, I let a cup fall on Miss Murray’s gown. I could have died wi’ shame. ‘Never mind—never mind, sir!’ said she ; ‘there is no harm done ;’ and she spoke sae proper and sae kindly, I was in love wi’ her very voice. But when I got time to observe her face, it was a perfect picture ; and through the hale night after, I could do naething but look at and think o’ Miss Murray.

“‘Man,’ says I to the flesher the next time I saw him, ‘wha was yon Miss Murray?’ ‘No match for a Grassmarket dealer, Davy,’ says he. ‘I was thinkin’ that,’ says I ; ‘but I wad like to be acquainted wi’ her.’ ‘Ye shall be that,’ says he ; and, after that, there was seldom a month passed that I was in Edinburgh but I saw Miss Murray. But as to courtin’, that was out o’ the question.

“A short time after this, a relation o’ my mither’s, wha had been a merchant in London, dee’d, and it was said we were his nearest heirs ; and that as he had left nae will, if we applied, we would get the property, which was worth about five thousand pounds. Weel, three or four years passed awa, and we heard something about the lawsuit, but naething about the money. I

was vexed for having onything to say to it. I thought it was only wasting a candle to chase a will-o'-the-wisp. About the time I speak o', my mither had turned very frail. I saw there was a wastin' awa o' nature, and she wadna be lang beside me. The day before her death, she took my hand, and 'Davy,' says she to me—'Davy,' poor body, she repeated (I think I hear her yet)—'it wad been a great comfort to me if I had seen ye settled wi' a decent partner before I dee'd; but it's no to be.'

"Weel, as I was saying, my mither dee'd, and I found the house very dowie without her. It wad be about three months after her death—I had been at Whitsunbank; and when I cam' hame, the servant lassie put a letter into my hands; and 'Maister,' says she, 'there's a letter—can it be for you, tnik ye?' It was directed, 'David Stuart, *Esquire* (nae less), for ———, by Coldstream.' So I opened the seal, and, to my surprise and astonishment, I found it was frae the man o' business I had employed in London, stating that I had won the law-plea, and that I might get the money whene'er I wanted it. I sent for the siller the very next post. Now, ye see, I was sick and tired o' being a bachelor. I had lang wished to be settled in a comfortable matrimonial way—that is, frae e'er I had seen Miss Murray. But, ye see, while I was a drover, I was very little at hame—indeed I was waur than an Arawbian—and had very little peace or comfort either, and I thought it was nae use takin' a wife until something better might cast up. But this wasna the only reason. There wasna a woman on earth that I thought I could live happy wi' but Miss Murray, and she belonged to a genteel family: whether she had ony siller or no, I declare, as I'm to be judged hereafter, I never did inquire. But I saw plainly it wadna do for a rough

country drover, jauped up to the very elbows, and sportin' a handfu' o' pound-notes the day, and no' worth a penny the morn—I say, I saw plainly it wadna do for the like o' me to draw up by her elbow, and say 'Here's a fine day, ma'am,' or, 'Hae ye ony objections to a walk?' or something o' that sort. But it was weel on for five years since I had singled her out; and though I never said a word anent the subject o' matrimony, yet I had reason to think she had a shrewd guess that my heart louped quicker when she opened her lips than if a regiment o' infantry had stealed behint me unobserved, and fired their muskets ower my shouther; and I sometimes thought that her een looked as if she wished to say, 'Are ye no gaun to ask me, David?'

"But still, when I thought she had been brought up a leddy in a kind o' manner, I durstna venture to mint the matter; but I was fully resolved and determined, should I succeed in getting the money I was trying for, to break the business clean aff hand. So, ye see, as soon as I got the siller, what does I do but sits down and writes her a letter—and sic a letter! I tauld her a' my mind as freely as though I had been speakin' to you. Weel, ye see, I gaed bang through to Edinburgh at ance, no three days after my letter; and up I goes to the Lawnmarket, where she was living wi' her mother, and raps at the door without ony ceremony. But when I had rapped, I was in a swither whether to staun till they came out or no, for my heart began to imitate the knocker, or rather to tell me how I ought to have knocked; for it wasna a loud, solid drover's knock like mine, but it kept rit-tit-tatting on my breast like the knock of a hairdresser's 'prentice bringing a bandbox fu' o' curls and ither knick-knackeries, for a leddy to pick and choose on for a fancy ball; and my face lowed as though ye were

haudin' a candle to it; when out comes the servant, and I stammers out, 'Is your mistress in?' says I. 'Yes, sir,' says she; 'walk in.' And in I walked; but I declare I didna ken whether the floor carried me, or I carried the floor; and wha should I see but an auld leddy wi' spectacles—the maiden's mistress, sure enough, though no mine, but my mother-in-law that was to be. So she looked at me, and I looked at her. She made a low curtsy, and I tried to mak' a bow; while all the time ye might hae heard my heart beatin' at the opposite side o' the room. 'Sir,' says she. 'Ma'am,' says I. I wad hae jumped out o' the window had it no been four stories high; but since I've gane this far, I maun say something, thinks I. 'I've ta'en the liberty o' callin', ma'am,' says I. 'Very happy to see ye, sir,' says she. Weel, thinks I, I'm glad to hear that, however; but had it been to save my life, I didna ken what to say next. So I sat down; and at length I ventured to ask, 'Is your daughter, Miss Jean, at hame, ma'am?' says I. 'I wate she is,' quo' she. 'Jean!' she cried wi' a voice that made the house a' dirl again. 'Comin', mother,' cried my flower o' the forest; and in she cam', skippin' like a perfect fairy. But when she saw me, she started as if she had seen an apparition, and coloured up to the very e'ebrows. As for me, I trembled like an ash leaf, and stepped forward to meet her. I dinna think she was sensible o' me takin' her by the hand; and I was just beginning to say again, 'I've taken the liberty,' when the auld wife had the sense and discretion to leave us by ourselves. I'm sure and certain I never experienced such a relief since I was born. My head was absolutely ringing wi' dizziness and love. I made twa or three attempts to say something grand, but I never got half-a-dozen words out; and finding it a' nonsense, I threw

my arms around her waist, and pressed her beatin' breast to mine, and stealing a hearty kiss, the whole story that I had made such a wark about was ower in a moment. She made a wee bit fuss, and cried 'Oh fie!' and 'Sir!' or something o' that kind; but I held her to my breast, declaring my intentions manfully—that I had been dying for her for five years, and now that I was a gentleman, I thought I might venture to speak. In fact, I held her in my arms until she next door to said 'Yes!'

"Within a week we had a' thing settled. I found out she had nae fortune. Her mother belanged to a kind o' auld family, that, like mony ithers, cam' down the brae wi' Prince Charles, poor fallow; and they were baith rank Episcopawlians. I found the mither had just sae muckle a year frae some o' her far-awa relations; and had it no been that they happened to ca' me Stuart, and I tauld her a rigmarole about my grandfaither and Culloden, so that she soon made me out a pedigree, about which I kenned nae mair than the man o' the moon, but kept saying 'yes' and 'certainly' to a' she said—I say, but for that, and confound me, if she wadna hae curled up her nose at me and my five thousand pounds into the bargain, though her lassie should hae starved. But Jeannie was a perfect angel. She was about two or three and thirty, wi' light brown hair, hazel e'en, and a waist as jimp and sma' as ye ever saw upon a human creature. She dressed maist as plain as a Quakeress, but was a pattern o' neatness. Indeed, a blind man might seen she was a leddy born and bred; and then for sense, haud at ye there, I wad matched her against the minister and the kirk elders put thegither. But she took that o' her mither; o' whom mair by-and-by.

"As I was saying, she was an Episcopawlian,—a

downright, open-day defender o' Archbishop Laud and the bloody Claverhouse; and she wished to prove down through me the priority and supremacy o' bishops ower presbyteries,—just downright nonsense, ye ken; but there's nae accounting for sooperstition. A great deal depends on how a body's brought up. But what vexed me maist was to think that she wad be gaun to ae place o' public worship on the Sabbath, and me to anither, just like twa strangers; and maybe if her minister preached half an hour langer than mine, or mine half an hour langer than hers, or when we had nae intermission, then there was the denner spoiled, and the servant no kened what time to hae it ready; for the mistress said ane o'clock, and the maister said twa o'clock. Now, I wadna gie tippence for a cauld denner.

“But, as I was telling ye about the auld wife, she thoct fit to read baith us a bit o' a lecture.

“‘Now, bairns,’ said she, ‘I beseech ye, think weel what ye are about; for it were better to rue at the very foot o' the altar, than to rue it but ance afterwards, and that ance be for ever. I dinna say this to cast a damp upon your joy, nor that I doubt your affection for ane another; but I say it as ane who has been a wife, and seen a good deal o' the world; an,' oh bairns! I say it as a *mother*! Marriage without love is like the sun in January—often clouded, often trembling through storms, but aye without heat; and its pillow is comfortless as a snow-wreath. But although love be the principal thing, remember it is not the only thing necessary. Are ye sure that ye are perfectly acquainted wi' each other's characters and tempers? Aboon a', are ye sure that ye esteem and respect ane anither? Without this, and ye may think that ye like each other, but it's no real love. It's no that kind o' liking that's

to last through married years, and be like a singing bird in your breasts to the end o' your days. No, Jeannie, unless your very souls be, as it were, cemented thegither, unless ye see something in him that ye see in naebody else, and unless he sees something in you that he sees in naebody else, dinna marry still. Passionate lovers dinna aye mak' affectionate husbands. Powder will bleeze fiercely awa in a moment; but the smotherin' peat retains fire and heat among its very ashes. Remember that, in baith man and woman, what is passion to-day may be disgust the morn. Therefore, think now; for it will be ower late to think o' my advice hereafter.'

" 'Troth, ma'am,' said I, 'and I'm sure I'll be very proud to ca' sic a sensible auld body *mither* !'

" 'Rather may ye be proud to call my bairn your *wife*,' said she; 'for, where a man ceases to be proud o' his wife, upon all occasions, and at all times, or where a wife has to blush for her husband, ye may say fareweel to their happiness. However, David,' continued she, 'I dinna doubt but ye will mak' a gude husband; for ye're a sensible, and I really think a deservin' lad; and were it nae mair than your name, the name o' Stuart wad be a passport to my heart. There's but ae thing that I'm feared on—just ae fault that I see in ye; indeed I may say it's the beginning o' a' ithers, and I wad fain hae ye promise to mend it; for it has brought mair misery upon the marriage state than a' the sufferings o' poverty and the afflictions o' death put thegither.'

" 'Mercy me, ma'am!' exclaimed I, 'what de ye mean? Ye've surely been misinformed.'

" 'I've observed it mysel', David,' said she seriously.

" 'Goodness, ma'am! ye confound me!' says I; 'if it's onything that's bad, I'll deny it point blank.'

“‘Ye mayna think it bad,’ says she again, ‘but I fear ye like a *dram*, and my bairn’s happiness demands that I should speak o’ it.’

“‘A *dram*!’ says I; ‘preserve us! is there ony ill in a *dram*?—that’s the last thing that I wad hae thought about.’

“‘Ask the broken-hearted wife,’ says she, ‘if there be ony ill in a *dram*—ask the starving family—ask the jailer and the gravedigger—ask the doctor and the minister o’ religion—ask where ye see rouns o’ furniture at the cross, or the auctioneer’s flag wavin’ frae the window—ask a deathbed—ask eternity, David Stuart, and they will tell ye if there be ony ill in a *dram*.’

“‘I hope, ma’am,’ says I,—and I was a guid deal nettled,—‘I hope, ma’am, ye dinna tak’ me to be a drunkard. I can declare freely, that unless maybe at a time by chance (and the best o’ us will mak’ a slip now and then), I never tak’ aboon twa or three glasses at a time. Indeed, three’s just my set. I aye say to my cronies, there is nae luck till the second tumbler, and nae peace after the fourth. So ye perceive, there’s not the smallest danger o’ me.’

“‘Ah, but, David,’ replied she, ‘there is danger. Habits grow stronger, nature weaker, and resolution offers less and less resistance; and ye may come to make four, five, or six glasses your set; and frae that to a bottle—your grave—and my bairn a broken-hearted widow.’

“‘Really, ma’am,’ says I, ‘ye talked very sensibly before, but ye are awa wi’ the harrows now—quite unreasonable a’thegither. However, to satisfy ye upon that score, I’ll mak’ a vow this very moment, that, except’——

“‘Mak’ nae rash vows,’ says she; ‘for a breath mak’s them, and less than a breath unmak’s them.’

But mind that, while ye wad be comfortable wi' your cronies, my bairn wad be frettin' her lane; and though she might say naething when ye cam hame, that wadna be the way to wear her love round your neck like a chain of gold; but, night after night, it wad break away link by link, till the whole was lost; and if ye didna hate, ye wad soon find ye were disagreeable to each other. Nae true woman will condescend to love ony man lang, wha can find society he prefers to hers in an alehouse. I dinna mean to say that ye should never enter a company; but dinna mak' a practice o't.'

"Weel, the wedding morning cam, and I really thocht it was a great blessin' folk hadna to be married every day. My neckcloth wadna tie as it used to tie, and but that I wadna swear at onybody on the day o' my marriage, I'm sure I wad hae wished some ill wish on the fingers o' the laundress. She had starched the muslins!—a circumstance, I am perfectly certain, unheard of in the memory o' man, and a thing which my mother ne'er did. It was stiff, crumpled, and clumsy. I vowed it was insupportable. It was within half an hour o' the time o' gaun to the chapel. I had tried a 'rose-knot,' a 'witch-knot,' a 'chaise-driver's knot,' and a 'running-knot,' wi' every kind o' knot that fingers could twist the neckcloth into, but the confounded starch made every ane look waur than anither. Three neckcloths I had rendered unwearable, and the fourth I tied in a 'beau-knot' in despair. The frill o' my sark-breast wadna lie in the position in which I wanted it! For the first time my very hair rose in rebellion—it wadna lie right; and I cried, 'The mischief tak' the barber!' The only part o' my dress wi' which I was satisfied, was a spotless pair o' nankeen pantaloons. I had a dog they ca'ed Mettle—it was a

son o' poor Rover, that I mentioned to ye before. Weel, it had been raining through the night, and Mettle had been out in the street. The instinct o' the poor dumb brute was puzzled to comprehend the change that had recently taken place in my appearance and habits, and its curiosity was excited. I was sitting before the looking-glass, and had just finished tying my cravat, when Mettle cam bouncing into the room; he looked up in my face inquisitively, and, to unriddle mair o' the matter, placed his unwashed paws upon my unsoiled nankeens. Every particular claw left its ugly impression. It was provoking beyond endurance. I raised my hand to strike him, but the poor brute wagged his tail, and I only pushed him down, saying, 'Sorrow tak' ye, Mettle, do ye see what ye've dune?' So I had to gang to the kitchen fire and stand before it to dry the damp, dirty footprints o' the offender. I then found that the waistcoat wadna sit without wrinkles, such as I had ne'er seen before upon a waistcoat o' mine. The coat, too, was insupportably tight below the arms; and, as I turned half round before the glass, I saw that it hung loose between the shouthers! 'As sure as a gun,' says I, 'the stupid soul o' a tailor has sent me hame the coat o' a humph-back in a mistak'!' My hat was fitted on in every possible manner, over the brow and aff the brow, now straight, now cocked to the right side and again to the left, but to no purpose; I couldna place it to look like mysel', or as I wished. But half-past eight chimed frae St. Giles'. I had ne'er before spent ten minutes to dress, shaving included, and that morning I had begun at seven! There was not another moment to spare; I let my hat fit as it would, seized my gloves, and rushed down stairs, and up to the Lawnmarket, where I knocked joyfully at the door o' my bonny bride.

“When we were about to depart for the chapel, the auld leddy rose to gie us her blessing, and placed Jeannie’s hand within mine. She shed a few quiet tears (a common circumstance wi’ mithers on similar occasions); and ‘Now, Jeannie,’ said she, ‘before ye go, I have just anither word or twa to say to ye’——

“‘Dearsake, ma’am!’ said I, for I was ont o’ a’ patience, ‘we’ll do very weel wi’ what we’ve heard just now, and ye can say onything ye like when we come back.’

“There was only an elderly gentleman and a young leddy accompanied us to the chapel; for Jeannie and her mother said that that was mair genteel than to have a gilravish o’ folk at our heels. For my part, I thought, as we were to be married, we micht as weel mak’ a wedding o’t. I, however, thought it prudent to agree to their wish, which I did the mair readily, as I had nae particular acquaintance in Edinburgh. The only point that I wad not concede was being conveyed to the chapel in a coach. That my plebeian blood, notwithstanding my royal name o’ Stuart, could not overcome. ‘Save us a’!’ said I, ‘if I wadna *walk* to be married, what in the three kingdoms wad tempt me to walk?’

“‘Weel,’ said the auld leddy, ‘my daughter will be the first o’ our family that ever gaed on foot to the altar.’

“‘An’ I assure ye, ma’am,’ said I, ‘that I would be the first o’ my family that ever gaed in ony ither way; and, in my opinion, to gang on foot shows a demonstration o’ affection and free-will, whereas gaun in a carriage looks as if there were unwillingness or compulsion in the matter.’ So she gied up the controversy. Weel, the four o’ us walked awa doun the Lawnmarket and High Street, and turned into a close by the tap o’ the Canongate, where the Episcopawlian chapel was

situated. For several days I had read ower the marriage service in the prayer-book, in order to master the time to say 'I will,' and other matters. Nevertheless, no sooner did I see the white gown of the clergyman, and feel Jeannie's hand trembling in mine, than he nicht as weel hae spoken in Gaelic. I mind something about the ring, and, when the minister was done, I whispered to the best man, 'It's a' ower now?' 'Yes,' said he. 'Heeven be thankit!' thought I.

"Weel, ye see, after being married, and as I had been used to an active life a' my days, I had nae skill in gaun about like a gentleman wi' my hands in my pockets, and I was anxious to tak' a farm. But Jeannie did not like the proposal, and my mother-in-law wadna hear tell o't; so, by her advice, I put out the money, and we lived upon the interest. For six years everything gaed straight, and we were just as happy and as comfortable as a family could be. We had three bairns: the eldest was a daughter, and we ca'd her Margaret, after her grandmother, who lived wi' us; the second was a son, and I named him Andrew, after my faither; and our third, and youngest, we ca'd Jeannie, after her mother. They were as clever, bonnie, and obedient bairns as ye could see, and everybody admired them. There was ane Luckie Macnaughton kept a tavern in Edinburgh at the time. A' sort o' respectable folk used to frequent the house, and I was in the habit o' gaun at night to smoke my pipe and hear the news about Bonaparte and the rest o' them; but it was very seldom that I exceeded three tumblers. Weel, among the customers there was ane that I had got very intimate wi'—as genteel and decent a looking man as ye could see; indeed I took him to be a particular serious and honest man. So there was ae night that I was rather mair than ordinary hearty, and says he to me: 'Mr Stuart,' says he, 'will

you lend your name to a bit paper for me?' 'No, I thank ye, sir,' says I; 'I never wish to be caution for onybody.' 'It's of no consequence,' said he, and there was no more passed. But as I was rising to gang hame, 'Come, tak' anither, Mr Stuart,' said he; 'I'm next the wa' wi' ye—I'll stand treat.' Wi' sair pressing I was prevailed upon to sit down again, and we had anither and anither, till I was perfectly insensible. What took place, or how I got hame, I couldna tell, and the only thing I remember was a head fit to split the next day, and Jeannie very ill pleased and powty-ways. However, I thought nae mair about it, and I was extremely glad I had refused to be bond for the person who asked me; for within three months I learned that he had broken and absconded wi' a vast o' siller. It was just a day or twa after I had heard the intelligence, I was telling Jeannie and her mother o' the circumstance, and what an escape I had had, when the servant lassie showed a bank clerk into the room. 'Tak' a seat, sir,' said I, for I had dealings wi' the bank. 'This is a bad business, Mr. Stuart,' said he. 'What business?' said I, quite astonished. 'Your being security for Mr. So-and-so,' said he. 'Me!' cried I, starting up in the middle o' the floor—'Me!—the scoundrel—I denied him point blank!' 'There is your own signature for a thousand pounds,' said the clerk. 'A thousand furies!' exclaimed I, stamping my foot; 'it's a forgery—an infernal forgery!' 'Mr. Such-a-one is witness to your handwriting,' said the clerk. I was petrified; I could hae drawn down the roof o' the house upon my head to bury me! In a moment a confused recollection o' the proceedings at Luckie Macnaughton's flashed across my memory, like a flame from the bottomless pit! There was a look o' witherin' reproach in my mother-in-law's een, and I heard her mutterin' between her teeth, 'I aye said

what his three tumblers wad come to.' But my dear Jeannie bore it like a Christian, as she is. She cam forward to me, an', poor thing, she kissed my cheek, and says she, 'Dinna distress yoursel', David, dear—it cannot be helped now—let us pray that this may be a lesson for the future.' I flung my arm round her neck—I couldna speak; but at last I said, 'Oh Jeannie, it will be a lesson, and your affection will be a lesson!' Some o' your book-learned folk wad ca' this conduct philosophy in Jeannie; but I, wha kenned every thought in her heart, was aware that it proceeded from her resignation as a true Christian, and her affection as a dutiful wife. Weel, the upshot was, I had robbed mysel' out o' a thousand pounds as simply as ye wad snuff out a candle. You have heard the saying, that sorrow ne'er comes singly; and I am sure, in a' my experience, I have found its truth. At that period I had twa thousand pounds, bearing six per cent., lying in the hands o' a gentleman o' immense property. Everybody believed him to be as sure as the bank. Scores o' folk had money in his hands. The interest was paid punctually, and I hadna the least suspicion. Weel, I was looking ower the papers one morning at breakfast, and I happened to glance at the list o' bankrupts (a thing I'm no in the habit o' doing), when, mercy me! whose name should I see but the very gentleman's that had my twa thousand pounds! I had the paper in one hand and a saucer in the other. The saucer and the coffee gaed smash upon the hearth! I trembled frae head to foot. 'Oh David! what's the matter?' cried Jeannie. 'Matter!' cried I; 'matter! I'm ruined!—we're a' ruined!' But it's o' nae use dwelling on this. The fallow didna pay eighteenpence to the pound; and there was three thousand gaen out o' my five! It was nae use, wi' a young family, to talk o' living on the interest o' our money now.

‘We maun tak’ a farm,’ says I; and baith Jeannie and her mother saw there was naething else for it. So I took a farm which lay partly in the Lammermoors and partly in the Merse. It took the thick end o’ eight hundred pounds to stock it. However, we were very comfortable in it; I found mysel’ far mair at hame than I had been in Edinburgh; for I had employment for baith mind and hands, and Jeannie very soon made an excellent farmer’s wife. Auld grannie, too, said she never had been sae happy; and the bairns were as healthy as the day was lang. We couldna exactly say that we were making what ye may ca’ siller, yet we were losing nothing, and every year laying by a little. There was a deepish burn ran near the onstead. We had been about three years in the farm, and our youngest lassie was about nine years auld. It was the summer time, and she had been paidling in the burn, and sooming feathers and bits o’ sticks; I was looking after something that had gaen wrang about the threshin’ machine, when I heard an unco noise get up, and bairns screamin’. I looked out, and I saw them runnin’ and shoutin’—‘Miss Jeannie! Miss Jeannie!’ I rushed out to the barnyard. ‘What is’t, bairns?’ cried I. ‘Miss Jeannie! Miss Jeannie!’ said they, pointing to the burn. I flew as fast as my feet could carry me. The burn, after a spate on the hills, often cam awa in a moment wi’ a fury that naething could resist. The flood had come awa upon my bairn; and there, as I ran, did I see her bonnie yellow hair whirled round and round, sinking out o’ my sight, and carried awa down wi’ the stream. There was a linn about thirty yards frae where I saw her, and oh! how I rushed to snatch a grip o’ her before she was carried ower the rocks! But it was in vain—a moment sooner, and I might hae saved her; but she was hurled ower the precipice when I was within an arm’s length,

and making a grasp at her bit frock ! My poor little Jeannie was baith felled and drowned. I plunged into the wheel below the linn, and got her out in my arms. I ran wi' her to the house, and I laid my drowned bairn on her mother's knee. Everything that could be done was done, and a doctor was brought frae Dunse ; but the spark o' life was out o' my bit Jeannie. I felt the bereavement very bitterly ; and for many a day, when Margaret and Andrew sat down at the table by our sides, my heart filled ; for as I was helpin' their plates, I wad put out my hand again to help anither, but there was nae ither left to help. But Jeannie took our bairn's death far sairer to heart than even I did. For several years she never was hersel' again, and just seemed dwinin' awa. Sea-bathing was strongly recommended ; and as she had a friend in Portobello, I got her to gang there for a week or twa during summer. Our daughter Margaret was now about eighteen, and her brother Andrew about fifteen ; and as I thought it would do them good, I allowed them to gang wi' their mither to the bathing. They were awa for about a month, and I firmly believe that Jeannie was a great deal the better o't. But it was a dear bathing to me on mony accounts for a' that. Margaret was an altered lassie a'thegither. She used to be as blithe as a lark in May, and now there was nae gettin' her to do onything ; but she sat couring and unhappy, and seighin' every handel-a-while, as though she were miserable. It was past my comprehension, and her mother could assign nae particular reason for it. As for Andrew, he did naething but yammer, yammer, frae morn till night, about the sea ; or sail boats, rigged wi' thread and paper sails, in the burn. When he was at the bathing he had been down aboot Leith, and had seen the ships, and naething wad serve him but he would be a sailor. Night and day did he torment

my life out to set him to sea. But I wadna hear tell o't—his mother was perfectly wild against it, and poor auld grannie was neither to haud nor to bind. We had suffered enough frae the burn at our door, without trusting our only son upon the wide ocean. However, all we could say had nae effect—the craik was never out o' his head; and it was still, 'I will be a sailor.' Ae night he didna come in as usual for his four-hours, and supper time cam, and we sent a' round about to seek him, but naebody had heard o' him. We were in unco distress, and it struck me at ance that he had run to sea. I saddled my horse that very night and set out for Leith, but could get nae trace o' him. This was a terrible trial to us, and ye may think what it was when I tell ye it was mair than a twelvemonth before we heard tell o' him; and the first accounts we had was a letter by his ain hand, written frae Bengal. We had had a cart down at Dunse for some bits o' things, and the lad brought the letter in his pocket; and weel do I mind how Jeannie cam' fleein' wi' it open in her hand across the fields to where I was looking after some workers thinnin' turnips, crying, 'David! David! here's a letter frae Andrew!' 'Read it! read it!' cried I, for my een were blind wi' joy. But Andrew's rinnin' awa wasna the only trial that we had to bear up against at this time. As I was tellin' ye, there was an unco change ower Margaret since she had come frae the bathin'; and a while after, a young lad that her mother said they had met wi' at Portobello began to come about the house. He was the son o' a merchant in Edinburgh, and pretended that he had come to learn to be a farmer wi' a neighbour o' ours. He was a wild, thoughtless, foppish-looking lad, and I didna like him; but Margaret, silly thing, was clean daft about him. Late and early I found him about the house, and I tauld

him I couldna allow him nor ony person to be within my doors at any such hours. Weel, this kind o' wark was carried on for mair than a year; and a' that I could say or do, Margaret and him were never separate; till at last he drapped off comin' to the house, and our daughter did naething but seigh and greet. I found that, after bringing her to the point o' marriage, he either wadna or durstna fulfil his promise unless I wad pay into his loof a thousand pounds as her portion. I could afford my daughter nae sic sum, and especially no to be thrown awa on the like o' him. But Jeannie cam to me wi' the tears on her cheeks, and 'O David!' says she, 'there's naething for it but partin' wi' a thousand pounds on the ae hand or our bairn's death—and her—shame on the ither!' Oh! if a knife had been driven through my heart, it couldna pierced it like the word *shame*! As a faither, what could I do? I paid him the money, and they were married.

"It's o' nae use tellin' ye how I gaed back in the farm. In the year sixteen my crops warna worth takin' aff the ground, and I had twa score o' sheep smothered the same winter. I fell behint wi' my rent; and household furniture, farm-stock, and everything I had, were to be sold off. The day before the sale, wi' naething but a bit bundle carrying in my hand, I took Jeannie on my ae arm and her puir auld mither on the other, and wi' a sad and sorrowfu' heart we gaed out o' the door o' the hame where our bairns had been brought up, and a sheriff's officer steeked it behint us. Weel, we gaed to Coldstream, and we took a bit room there, and furnished it wi' a few things that a friend bought back for us at our sale. We were very sair pinched. Margaret's gudeman ne'er looked near us, nor rendered us the least assistance, and she hadna it in her power. There was nae ither alternative that I

could see; and I was just gaun to apply for labouring wark when we got a letter frae Andrew, enclosing a fifty-pound bank-note. Mony a tear did Jeannie and me shed ower that letter. He informed us that he had been appointed mate o' an East Indiaman, and begged that we would keep ourselves easy; for while he had a sixpence, his faither and mither should hae the half o't. Margaret's husband very soon squandered away the money he had got frae me, as weel as the property he had got frae his faither; and, to escape the jail, he ran off, and left his wife and family. They cam to stop wi' me; and for five years we heard naething o' him. We had begun a shop in the spirit and grocery line, and really we were remarkably fortunate. It was about six years after I had begun business, ae night just after the shop was shut, Jeannie and her mother, wha was then about ninety, and Margaret and her bairns, and mysel', were a' sittin' round the fire, when a rap cam to the door; ane o' the bairns ran and opened it, and twa gentlemen cam in. Margaret gied a shriek, and ane o' them flung himsel' at her feet. 'Mother! faither!' said the other, 'do ye no ken me?' It was our son Andrew, and Margaret's gudeman! I jump up, and Jeannie jump up; auld grannie raise totterin' to her feet, and the bairns screamed, puir things. I got haud o' Andrew, and his mother got haud o' him, and we a' grat wi' joy. It was such a night o' happiness as I had never kenned before. Andrew had been made a ship captain. Margaret's husband had repented o' a' his follies, and was in a good way o' doing in India; and everything has gane right and prospered wi' our whole family frae that day to this."

THE BURGHER'S TALES.

THE ANCIENT BUREAU.

THE sources of legends are not often found in old sermons; and yet it will be admitted that there are few remarkable events in man's history, which, if inquired into, will not be found to embrace the elements of very impressive pulpit discourses. Even in cases which seem to disprove a special, if not a general Providence, there will always be found in the account between earth and heaven some "desperate debt," mayhap an "accommodation bill," which justifies the ways of God to man. It may even be said that the fact of our being generally able to find that item is a proof of the wonderful adaptability of Christianity to the fortunes and hopes of our race. That ministers avoid the special topics of peculiar destinies, may easily be accounted for otherwise than by supposing that they cannot explain them so as to vindicate God's justice; but if ever there was a case where that difficulty would seem to the eye of mere reason to culminate in impossibility, it is that which I have gleaned from a veritable pulpit lecture. I have the sermon in my possession, but from the want of the title-page, I am unable to ascertain the author. The date at the end is 1793, and the text is, "Inscrutable are *his* judgments."

Inscrutable indeed in the case to which the words were applied—no other than an instance of death by starvation, which occurred in Edinburgh in the year we have just mentioned. In that retreat of poverty

called Middleton's Entry, which joins the dark street called the Potterrow, and Bristo Street, the inhabitants were roused into surprise, if not a feeling approaching to horror, by the discovery that a woman, who had lived for a period of fifteen years in a solitary room at the top of one of the tenements, had been found in bed dead. A doctor was called, but before he came it was concluded by those who had assembled in the small room that she had died from want of food; and such was the fact. The body—that of one not yet much past the middle of life, and with fair complexion and comely features—was so emaciated, that you might have counted the ribs merely by the eye; and all those parts where the bones are naturally near the surface exhibited a sharpness which suggested the fancy, that as you may see a phosphorescent skeleton through the glow, you beheld in the candle-light the figure of death under the thin covering of the bones. She realized, in short, the description which doctors give of the appearance of those unfortunate beings who die of what is technically called *atrophia familiarum*—that Nemesis of civilisation which points scornfully to the victim of want, and then looks round on God's bountiful table, set for the meanest of his creatures. So we may indite; but rhetoric, which is useless where the images cannot rise to the dignity or descend to the humiliation of the visible fact, must always come short of the effect of the plain words that a human creature—perhaps good and amiable and delicate to that shyness which cannot complain—has died in the very midst of a proclaimed philanthropy, and within the limits of a space comprehending smoking tables covered with luxuries, and surrounded by Christian men and women filled with meat and drink to repletion and satiety.

Some such thoughts might have been passing through

the minds of the assembled neighbours; and they could not be said to be the less true that a shrunk and partially-withered right arm showed that the doom of the woman had been so far precipitated by the still remaining effects of an old stroke of palsy. And the gossip confirmed this, going also into particulars of observation,—how she had kept herself so to herself as if she wished to avoid the neighbours,—a fact which to an extent justified their imputed want of attention; how almost the only individual who had visited her was a peculiar being, in the shape of a very little man, with a slight limp and thin pleasant features, illuminated by a pair of dark, penetrating eyes. For years and years had he been seen, always about the same hour of the day, ascending her stair, and carrying a flagon, supposed to contain articles of food. Then the gossiping embraced the furniture and other articles in the room, which, however they might have been unnoticed before, had now assumed the usual interest when seen in the blue light of the acted tragedy: the small mahogany table and the two chairs—how strange that they should be of mahogany!—and some of the few marrowless plates in the rack over the fireplace, why, they were absolute china! but above all, the exquisite little bureau of French manufacture, with its drawers, its desk, and pigeon-holes, and cunning slides—what on earth was it doing in that room, when its value even to a broker would have kept the woman alive for months? Questions these put by a roused curiosity, and perhaps not worth answer. Was not she a woman, and was not that enough?

Not enough; for legendary details cluster round startling events, and often carry a moral which may prevent a repetition of these; and so, had it not been for this apparently inexplicable death by starvation,

our wonderful story might never have gathered listeners round the evening fire. We must go back some twenty years before the date of the said sermon to find a certain merchant-burgess of the city of Edinburgh, David Grierson, occupying a portion of a front land situated in the Canongate, a little to the east of Leith Wynd. It would be sheer affectation in us to pretend that this merchant-burgess had any mental or physical characteristic about him to justify his appearance in a romance, if we except the power he had shown of amassing wealth, of which he had so much that he could boast the possession of more than twenty goodly tenements, some of wood and some of stone, besides shares of ships and bank stock. And no doubt this exception might stand for the thing excepted from, for money, though commonly said to be extraneous, is often so far in its influences intraneous, that it changes the feelings and motives, and enables them to work. And then don't we know that it is by extraneous things we are mostly led? But however all that may be, certain it is that our merchant-burgess was a great man in his own house in the Canongate, where his family consisted of Rachel Grierson, his natural daughter, by a woman who had been long dead, and Walter Grierson, his legitimate nephew, who had been left an orphan in his early years, and who was his nearest lawful heir. Two servants completed the household; and surely in this rather curious combination there might be, if only circumstances were favourable to their development, elements which might impart interest to a story.

So long as the shadow of the dark angel was, as Time counted, far away from him, Burgess David was comparatively happy; but as he got old and older, he began to realize the condition of the poet—

“ Now pleasure will no longer please,
And all the joys of life are gone ;
I ask no more on earth but ease,
To be at peace, and be alone :
I ask in vain the winged powers
That weave man’s destiny on high ;
In vain I ask the golden hours
That o’er my head for ever fly.”

Then he waxed more and more anxious as to what he was to do with his money. He tried to put away the thought ; but the terrible *magistra necessitas* went round and round him with ever-diminishing circles, clearly indicating a conflict in which he must succumb. He must make a will ; an act which it is said no man is ever in a hearty condition to perform, unless mayhap he is angry, and wishes to cut off an ungrateful dog with a shilling ; and besides the general disinclination to sign the disposal of so much wealth, of which he was more than ordinarily fond, and to give away, as it were, *omnia præter animam*, in the very view of giving away the soul too, he was in a great perplexity as to how to divide his means. Nor could he reconcile himself to a division at all, preferring, as the greatly lesser evil, the alternative of destinating his fortune all of a lump, with some hope of its being kept together. As for Walter, though he had some affection for him, he had not much confidence in him, for he had seen that he was hare-brained as regarded things which suited his fancy, and pig-brained as respected those which solicited and required sound judgment ; while Rachel, again, was everything which, among the lower angels, could be comprehended under the delightful title of “ dear soul,” an amiable and devoted creature, as steadfast in her affections as she was wise in the selection of their objects. So by revolving in his mind

all the beauties of the character of her who, however disqualified by law, was still of his flesh and blood, yea, of his very nature, as he complacently thought in compliment to himself, he became more and more reconciled to his intention, if the very thought of making a will, which had been horrible to him, did not become even a pleasing kind of meditation. So is it—when Nature imposes an inevitable duty, she gives man the power of inventing a pleasing reason for his obedience; nay, so much of a self-dissembler is he, that he even cheats himself into the belief that his obedience is an act of his own will. In all which he at least proved the value of one of the arguments in favour of marriage; for trite it is to say, a bachelor bears to no one a love which reconciles him to will-making, while a father, in leaving his means to his children, feels as if he were giving to himself. But this plan of our merchant-burgess had in addition a spice of ingenuity in it which still more pleased him—he would so contrive matters that the daughter and the nephew would become, after his death, man and wife. He had only some doubts how far their tastes agreed,—probably an absurd condition, in so much as we all know that love is often struck out by opposition, and that there is a pleasant suitability in a husband preferring the head of a herring, and the wife the tail.

Having thus arrived at a sense of his duty by the pleasant path of his affection, Mr. David Grierson seized the first opportunity which presented itself of sounding the heart of Rachel, in order to know in what direction her affections ran. Sitting in his big chair, all so comfortably cushioned by the hands of the said Rachel herself, and with a good fire alongside, due also to her unremitting care, he called her to him, and placing his arm round her waist, as he was often in the habit of doing, said to her—

"Rachel, dear, I feel day by day my strength leaving me, and it may be, nay, will be, that I will not be very much longer with you."

Rachel looked at him for a little, but said nothing, for, as the saying goes, her heart came to her mouth, and she could not have spoken even if she would; but the father understood all this, and preferred the mute expression of a real grief to a hysterical burst—of which, indeed, her calm genial nature was incapable.

"Forgive me, dear," continued he, "for I would not willingly cause you sorrow, but I have a reason for speaking in this grave way. Who is to fill the old arm-chair when I cannot occupy it?"

And he smiled somewhat grimly as he sought her eye, in which he could observe the most real of all nature's evidences of emotion.

"What mean you, father?" she replied, with something like an effort to respond to his humour.

"Why, then, Rachel," he said, "to be out with it, I want to know whether you have fixed your heart on any one."

"Only upon you, dear father," she replied, with a smile which struggled against her seriousness.

"Nay, Rachel," continued he. "It is no light matter, and I must have an answer. I intend to leave you my whole fortune, but upon one condition, which is, that if Walter Grierson shall sue for your hand, you will consent to marry him."

To this there was a reply given with an alacrity which showed how her heart pointed—"Yes;" then, adding that wonderful little word "but," which makes such havoc among our resolutions, she paused, while her eyes sought the ground.

"What 'but' can be here?" interjected the old man.

"Surely you do not mean to doubt whether *he* would consent?"

"And yet that is just my doubt," she replied, as if she felt humiliated by the admission.

"Doubt!" cried the father, in rising wrath; "doubt, doubt if a beggar would consent to be made rich by marrying *you*! Why, Rachel, dear, if the fellow were to breathe a sigh of hesitation, he would deserve to be a beggar with more holes than wholes in his gabardine, and too poor even to possess a wallet to carry his bones and crumbs. Have you any reason for your strange statement?"

"No," replied the girl, with a sigh. "It is only my heart that speaks."

"And the heart never lies," said he sharply. "But I shall see," he muttered to himself, "whether a certain tongue in a certain head shall speak in the same way."

"But would it not bring me down," said she, "were he to think that he was forced by a promise?"

"A promise!" rejoined he; "why, so it would, my dear. I see you are right." But then he thought he could sound him without putting any obligation upon him. "And a pretty obligation it would be," he continued, "for a young fellow cut off with a shilling to bind himself to consent to be the acceptor of two such gifts as a fine girl and a fortune."

And Burgess David tried to laugh; but the effort was still that of a heavy heart, and, reclining his head upon the back of the chair, he relapsed into those thoughts which, as Age advances to the term where Hope throws down her lamp, press in and in upon the spirit. Rachel glided away quietly, perhaps to think; and certainly she had something to think about.

So, too, doubtless had Mr. David Grierson, who, after indulging in his reverie, wherein the subject of

will-making suggested a match between himself and a certain bridegroom who never says nay, awoke to the interest of his scheme of match-making in this world. So far he had accomplished his object, for he could rely upon his faithful Rachel's performance of her promise; and if the two should be married, he knew how to take care to give her the power of the money, and keep a youth, in whose prudence he had no great faith, in proper check. Next he had to sound the nephew. Nor was it long before he had an opportunity—even that same afternoon.

"Walter," he began with an abruptness for which probably the young man was scarcely prepared, "I am getting old, and must now think of arranging my affairs so as to endeavour to make my fortune serve the purpose of rendering those happy in whom I have a natural interest. So I have some interest also as well as, I suspect, some right to put the question to you, whether you ever thought of Rachel Grierson for your wife?"

"Upon my word," replied the nephew, with just as little *mauvais honte* as suited his nature, "I never thought of aspiring to the *honour*."

A word this last which grated on the ear of the rich merchant-burgess, inasmuch as it suggested a suspicion of the figure of speech called irony, seeing that Rachel Grierson was a bastard, and the youth carried the legitimate blood of the Griersons in his veins.

"Honour or no honour," replied he sharply, and perhaps contrary to his original intention, "Rachel Grierson is to inherit my fortune, ay, every penny thereof."

"Every penny thereof," echoed the youth, as if his mind had flown away with the words, and dropt them in despair as it flew.

"Yes," rejoined the angry uncle, "lands, tenements,

hereditaments, shares, dividends, stock, furniture, bed and table linen."

"And table linen," echoed the entranced nephew.

"Yes; everything," continued the uncle; and calming down as he saw the white lips and blank despair of the youth, he added—"And to you I will leave and bequeath my natural-born daughter, Rachel Grierson."

And as he uttered these significant words, he watched carefully the face of the youth, where, however, all indications defied his perspicacity, inasmuch as blank astonishment was still the prevailing expression. But after some minutes the young man stuttered out—

"A legacy worthy of a nobleman!"

Words that sounded beautifully, because they were true as regarded Rachel, whatever they might be as respected his secret intention; yet as the children vaticinate from the examination of each other's tongues, if the uncle had examined the organ, he might have discovered some of those blue lines which produce an exclamation from the young augurs.

"*Words* worthy, too, of a nobleman," cried the old man in a trembling voice; and holding out his hand, which shook under his emotion of delight at hearing his beloved Rachel so praised, he seized that of his nephew—

"Yes, Walter," he added, "you have by these words redeemed yourself, and I will take them as an offering of your willingness to accept my legacy; but, remember, I extort no promise, which might reduce the value of a young woman's affection,—a gift to be accepted for its own sake."

"I am content," said Walter.

"And I am satisfied," added the uncle. "But here is wine on the table," he continued, as he turned his eye in the direction of a decanter of good claret, just as

if Rachel had, by her art of love, anticipated what he wished at this moment. "Ah, Walter, if she shall watch your wants as she has done mine, you will live to feel that you cannot want *her*, and live; so fill up a glass for me, and one for yourself, that we may drink to the happiness of the dear girl when, after I am dead, she shall become your wedded wife."

"With all and sundry lands, tenements, hereditaments, and so forth," cried Walter, with a laugh which might pass as genuine, and which was responded to by a chuckle from the dry throat of the uncle, which certainly was so.

So the pledge was taken; and Walter Grierson went away, leaving the old merchant-burgess as happy as any poor mortal creature can be when so near the term of his departure. Such is our way of speaking; and yet we are forced to admit, that at no period of life, however near the ultimate, abating the advent of the great illumination which breaks like a new dawn upon the internal sense of a favoured few, can you say that the hold of this world upon the spirit is ever renounced. Whether the young man was as happy, we may not venture to say; but this we might surmise, even at this stage of our story, and in reference to the classical proverb, that the bastard might be the beautiful Nisa, and the lawful heir the ill-favoured Mopsus.

These things we may leave to development; and with a caution to the reader not to be over-suspicious, we will follow our Nisa, Rachel Grierson, as she proceeds from the house of the merchant-burgess up the High Street, at a period of the evening of the same day when the shadows of the tall lands wrapped the crowds of loiterers and passengers almost in utter darkness; not that she chose this time for any purpose of secrecy, —for she had no secret, except that solitary one which

every young woman has, and holds, up to the minute of conviction, that she is engaged, after which it becomes a flame blown by her own breath,—but simply because it suited the routine of her duties. Her night-cloak kept her from the cold, and the panoply of her virtue secured her from insult; so, threading her way amidst the throng, she arrived at the head of the old winding street called the West Bow, where, at a projection a little to the north of Major Weir's Entry, she mounted a narrow stair. On arriving at a door on the third landing-place, she tapped gently, and in obedience to a shrill voice, which cried "Come in," she lifted the latch, and entered a small room, where, at a bench, sat a very peculiar personage. This was no other than the famous Paul Bennett, an artist in jewellery, who at that time excelled all his compeers for beauty of design and exquisite refinement of minute elaboration. And this, perhaps, a good judge of mankind might have augured of him; for while his body was far below the middle size, his long thin fingers, tapering to a point, seemed to be suitable instruments intended to serve a pair of dark eyes so lustrous and sharp, that nothing within the point of the beginning of infinitesimals might seem to escape them. Nor was his pale face less suggestive of his peculiar faculties; for it was made up of fine delicate features, harmonized into regularity, and so expressive, that it seemed to change with every feeling of the moment, even as the flitting moonbeams play on the face of a statue. In addition to these peculiarities, his appearance was rendered the more striking, that, working as he did under a strong reflected light, cast down immediately before his face by a dark shade, the upper part of his person and a circle on the bench were in bright relief, while the other parts of the room were comparatively dark.

"Still at work, Paul," said Rachel, as she entered; "how long do you intend to work to-night?"

"Till the idea becomes dim, and the sense waxes thick," replied he, as he turned his eyes upon her.

"I have something to tell you," she continued, as she sat down on a chair between him and the fire, if that could be called such which consisted of some red cinders.

"Some other wonder," replied he; "another cropping out of the workings of fate."

Words these, as coming from our little artist, which require some explanation, to the effect that Paul was a philosopher, too, in his own way. Early misfortunes, which mocked the resolutions of a will never very strong, had played into a habit of thinking, and brought him to the conviction that every movement or change in the moral world, not less than in the physical, is the result of a cause which runs back through endless generations to the first man, and even beyond him. Paul was, in short, a fatalist; not of that kind which romance writers feign in order to make the character work through a gloomy presentiment of his own destiny, but merely a believer in a universal original decree, the workings of which we never know until the effects are seen. A fatalist of this kind almost every man is, less or more, in some mood or another; only, to save himself from being a puppet, moved by springs or drawn by strings, he generally contrives to except his *will* from the scheme of the iron-bound necessity. But Paul would permit of no such exception. The will, with him, was merely the *motive in action*; and as he compelled you to admit that no thought is, in man's experience, ever called into being, only developed from prior conditions, and that, even as to an idea, the doctrine *Nihil nisi ex ovo* is true, and therefore that no

man can manufacture a motive, so he took a short way with the maintainers of a moral liberty. This doctrine, so gloomy, so grand, yet so terrible, was, to Paul, a conviction, which he almost made practical; nay, he seemed to realize a kind of poetic pleasure from reveries, which represented to him the universe, with the sun and the stars, and all living creatures—walking, flying, swimming, or crawling—going through their parts in the great melodrama of destiny, no one knowing how, or why, or wherefore, yet every human being believing that he is master of his actions, at the very moment that he might be conscious that his belief is only a part of the great law of necessity. Then it seemed as if this delusion in which men indulge, and are forced to indulge, was an element of the farce introduced into the play, so as to relieve the mind from the heavy burden of contemplating so terrible a theory.

“Something to tell me, Rachel!” continued he; “and what may that be?”

“My father has told me to-day,” replied she, “that he is to leave me all his fortune; and however grieved I may be at the thought of losing him, I am glad to think that it may be in my power to be of service to you, Paul, as my only relative on my mother’s side.”

“Service,” muttered Paul to himself, while he looked into her face as wistfully as a lover, which indeed he was, though in secret. “And what is to become of Walter Grierson?” he asked.

“When he finds that the entire fortune is mine,” replied she, “he will propose to marry me; and this is what my father wishes to bring about by putting the fortune in my power.”

“So the events crop out from the long chain of causes,” thought Paul; “but who shall tell the final

issue? Look here, Rachel," he continued, as he laid his hand on a golden locket which lay before him in the shape of a heart, "I have made this to order;" and as he spoke he touched a spring, whereupon a lid opened, and up flew a pair of tiny doves, which, with fluttering wings of gold and azure, immediately saluted each other with their long bills, and piped a few notes in imitation of the cushat. The touch of another spring immediately consigned them again to the cavity of the heart,—a conceit altogether of such refined manufacture and ingenuity of design, as to remind us of the saying of Cicero, that there is an exquisiteness in art which never can be known till it is seen fresh from the hand of genius.

"And who ordered that beautiful thing?" inquired Rachel.

"Walter Grierson," replied Paul, fixing his eyes upon her sorrowfully, as if he felt oppressed by that gloomy theory of his.

Nor did he fail to perceive the effect his few words had produced upon the heart of his cousin, where there was a fluttering very different from that of cooing turtles; for the fate of her happiness seemed to her to be suspended on the answer to a question, and that question she was afraid to put.

"Be patient, and learn to hear," continued the little philosopher. "Ere yet Cheops built the Pyramids, or Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, yea, before the first sensation tingled in the first nerve made out of the dust, the beginnings were laid of these events of this day and hour, and, in particular, of that one which may well astonish you and grieve you—viz., that the locket is intended for and inscribed to Agnes Ainslie."

"Agnes Ainslie!" repeated Rachel, with parched

lips and trembling voice, "the daughter of Mr. John Ainslie, my father's agent, to whom I am even now going, by Mr. Grierson's command, to request him to call to morrow for the purpose of preparing the settlement!"

"A strange perplexity of events," said Paul. "But what is this mingling of threads to the great web of the universe, which is eternally being woven and unwoven, unaffected by the will of man? And then these small issues, the loss of a fortune by a man, and that of a lover by a woman, how mighty they are to the individual hearts and affections!"

"Mighty indeed," sobbed Rachel, who had loved Walter so long, and rejoiced to have it in her power to bestow a fortune upon him, and now found all her hopes dissolved into the ashes of grief and disappointment. "Mighty indeed; and these thoughts of yours are so dreary, how can one believe in them and live!"

"We are compelled to live," replied he, "even by that same decree which binds us to the infinite chain. Were it not so, man would imitate the day-flies, and die at sundown, that he might escape the dark night which reveals to him the mystery of his being, whereat he trembles and sobs; and all this is also in the decree."

"But if all these things are so," said Rachel, "what do you say of happiness? Is there no joy in the world? Are not the birds happy, when in the morning the woods resound with their song, and so, too, every animal after its kind? Are not children joyful when the house rings with their mirth? and have not men and women their pleasures of a thousand kinds? nay, might not I myself have been one of the happiest of beings, if, with the fortune which is to be left to me, that locket had been engraved with the name of Rachel Grierson in place of Agnes Ainslie?"

"Yes," replied he, "happiness is in the decree as well; and," he added with a smile, "it is always cropping out around us, but no one can manufacture the article. If you wait for it, you may feel it; if you run after it, you will probably not find it, because it is not ready by those eternal laws which, at their beginning, involved its coming up at a certain moment of long after-years. Then, at the best, pleasure and pain are mere oscillations; but the first movement is downwards, for we cry when we come into the world; and the last is also downwards, for we groan when we go out of it. It is the old rhyme—

‘We scream when we’re born,
We groan when we’re dying;
And all that’s between
Is but laughing and crying.’”

A parade of philosophy all this which at another time might have had but a small effect upon a youthful mind, but Rachel was in the meantime occupied by looking at the inscription on the fatal toy; and we all know that the feeling of the dominant idea of the moment assimilates to its own hue the light or shade of all other ideas of a cognate kind; and there is in this process also a selection and rejection whereby all melancholy ideas cluster in the gloomy atmosphere, if we may so term it, of the prevailing depression, and all joyful ones come together by the attraction of a joyful thought; and so Rachel was impressed by views which, if they had been modified by the comforting doctrines of Christianity, might have enabled her at once to bear and to hope. Even when Paul had finished, she was still gazing on the locket. A moment or two more, and she laid it down with a deep sigh, saying, almost involuntarily, "If my name had been there, I would not have repined at the loss of all my

expected fortune." Then, shaking hands with this peculiar being, whom she could not but respect for his ingenuity, as well as for a kindliness and sympathy which lay at the bottom of all his abstract theories, she left him to his work, at which he would continue till drowsiness made, as he said, the idea dim and the nerve thick.

Retracing her steps down the long dark stair, not a very efficient medium for the removal of impressions so unlike the results of our natural consciousness, Rachel Grierson found herself again among the bustling crowds of the High Street. Nor could she view these busy people in the light by which she saw them before entering the little dark room of the philosopher. Though she did not know the classical word, she looked upon them as so many *automata*; and the long chain of causes came into her mind so vividly, that she found herself repeating the very words of Paul. Then there was the reference to her own individual fate; and was it not through the self-medium she saw all these people in so strange a light?—with Hope's lamp dashed down at her feet, and extinguished at the very moment when, by the communication of her father, she thought she had the means of recruiting it with a store of oil never to be exhausted till possession was accomplished. Still under these impressions, she came to the door of Mr. Ainslie's house. There were sounds of mirth and music coming from within; and so plastic is the mind when under a deep and engrossing feeling, that she found no difficulty in concentrating and modifying these sounds into joyful articulations from the very mouths of Walter Grierson and Agnes Ainslie themselves. Such are the moral echoes which respond to, because they are formed by the suspicions of, disappointed love. No longer for the moment were Paul's thoughts true.

These happy beings inside were happy because they had the hearts and the wills to enjoy ; but she could draw no conclusion that she herself could dispose her mind for the acceptance of the world's pleasures also when her gloom should be away among the shadows, and nature's innumerable enjoyments placed within her power. Yet, withal, she could execute her commission, and upon the door being opened, she could enter in the very face of that mirth of which she fancied herself the victim.

On being shown into a parlour, she was presently waited upon by Mr. Ainslie, who seemed to her to have come from the scene of enjoyment in the drawing-room. She could even fancy that he eyed her as in some way standing in the path of his daughter's expectations through Walter—a fancy which of course would gain strength from the somewhat excited manner in which he received the words of her commission, to the effect that he would repair the next forenoon to the house of the merchant-burgess, for the purpose of preparing his last will and testament. The notary agreed to attend, and thus, still construing appearances according to the assimilating bent of her mind, she departed for home. After going through the routine of her domestic duties, and caring for her invalid father, she retired to bed—that place of so-called rest, where mortals chew the cud of the thoughts of the day or of years. And how unlike the two processes, the physical and the mental!—in the one is brought up for a second enjoyment the green grass of nature, still fresh and palatable and nutritious ; in the other, the seared leaves of memory, feeding unavailing regrets, and filling the microcosm with phantoms and dire shapes of evil, the types whereof never had an existence in the outer world. Walter Grierson was lost to her for ever, and the dire energies of fate, as described

by the artist-philosopher, seemed to hang over her, claiming, in harsh tones, her will as a mere instrument in the working out of her own destiny.

Next day Mr. Ainslie called, and was for a long time closeted with Mr. Grierson; but so careless was she now of the fortune about being left to her, and which she was satisfied would not now be a means of showing her affection for Walter, that she felt little interest in an affair which otherwise might have appeared of so much importance to her. Her attention was, notwithstanding, claimed by an incident. After the interview, the notary visited Walter Grierson in his room, where the young man seemed to have been waiting for him. In ordinary circumstances it might have appeared strange that a man of business, bound to secrecy, would divulge the terms of a will to any one, but far more that he should take means for apprising a nephew that he was deprived of any share of his uncle's means. Nor could she account for this interview on any other supposition than that Mr. Ainslie knew of the intentions of Walter towards his daughter, and that he took this early opportunity of intimating that a disinherited young man, of the grade of a merchant's clerk, would not, as a son-in-law, suit the expectations of an ambitious writer. Yet out of this interview there came to, if not drawn by, her fancy a glimmer of hope, inasmuch as, if the young man were rejected by the notary in consequence of the ban of disinheritance, he would be left to the attractions of her wealth; but this supposition involved the assumption that her triumph would be over a mind that was mercenary, and not over a heart predisposed to love; nay, her generosity revolted at the thought of gratifying her long-concealed passion at the expense of the sacrificed love of another. That other, too, had a better right to the object than she herself, in so far that Agnes

Ainslie's love had been returned, while hers had not. But these speculations were to be brought to the test by words and actions.

No sooner had Mr. Ainslie left than Rachel was visited in her private parlour by Walter Grierson himself. He had seldom taken that liberty before, for her secret passion had been ruled by a stern virtue. A natural shyness, remote from coyness, demanded the conciliation of respect, though ready at a moment to pass into the generosity of confidence where she was certain of a return; but his presence before her might have been accounted for by his appearance, which was that of one whose excitement was only attempted to be overborne by an effort—a result more mechanical than spiritual. His manner, not less than his countenance, composed to gravity, was belied by the tremulous light of his eye; and as he seized her hand and pressed it fervently, she could feel that his trembled more than her own. Her manner was also embarrassed, as it well might be, where so many conflicting feelings, some revived from old memories, and some produced by the singular events of the day and hour, agitated her frame.

"I am going to surprise you, cousin," he said, while he fixed his eye upon her, as if to watch the effect of his words.

Rachel forgot for a moment the philosophy of Paul—why should one be surprised when the thing that is to be is a result of a change in something else as old as Aldebaran, let alone "the sun and the seven stars?" She was indeed prepared for a surprise.

"It is just the old story of the heart," he resumed. "Our intercourse began so early, and partook so much of that of mere relations, that I never could tell when the mere social feeling gave place to another which I need not mention. You know, Rachel, what I mean."

She was silent because she was distrustful, yet her heart beat bravely in spite of her efforts; for was not this man the object of her love, and is not love moved with an eloquence which makes reason ashamed of her poor figures and modes?

"Yes," he went on, "I take it for granted that you know I am only labouring towards a confession. Yes, dear heart, for years I have considered you as the one sole object in all this world of fair visions formed to make me happy. You see I cannot get out of the ordinary mode of speech. The lover is fated to adjure, to praise, and to petition always in the same set form of words; yet is not the confession enough?"

"So far," said she; "but I have never seen any evidence of all this;" as if she wanted more in the same strain—sweet to the ear, though distrusted by the reason.

"No more you have," he continued, "yet you know that love is often suspicious of itself. I have watched with my eye your movements and attitudes when you thought I was not observing you. My ear has followed your voice through adjoining rooms when you thought I was listening to other sounds. I have admired your words, without venturing the response of admiration. Often I have wished to fold you in my arms when you dreamt nothing of my inward thoughts. In short, Rachel, I have loved you for years! Yes, I have enjoyed, or suffered, this gloating, yea, delightful misery of the heart when it feeds upon its own secret treasures, and trembles at the test which might dissolve the dream."

"And why this suppression and secrecy, Walter?" she asked. "How could you know," she continued, as she held down her head, "that I would be adverse to your wishes; nay, that I was not even in the same condition as yourself?"

"Surely you do not mean to say that?" he cried,

with something like the rapture of one relieved by pleasure from pain. "I am not worthy even of the suspicion that you speak according to the bidding of your heart. Have I not watched your looks, and penetrated into your eyes, to ascertain whether I might venture to know my fate, and yet never could discover even the symptom of a return; and then was I not under a conviction that your affections were engaged elsewhere?"

"Where?" asked Rachel, with a look of surprise.

"We are apparently drifting into confessions," responded he. "I may say that I never could construe your visits to Paul, the ingenious artist, merely as dictated by admiration of his wonderful genius."

"You do not know that Paul is the son of my mother's sister," replied she. "Your uncle knows; but there may be reasons why you don't."

"Then I am relieved," was the lover's ejaculation, in a tone as if he had got quit of a great burden.

"Yes, that is the truth," continued she; "but I also confess that I have been attracted to his small dark workshop by the exquisite curiosities of art on which he is so often engaged, and which, by occupying so much of his time, keep him poor. It was only yesterday I saw on his bench a locket which seems to transcend all his prior efforts."

The young man smiled and nodded. What could he mean? Why was he not dumbfounded?

"It is in the shape of a heart," she continued; "and upon touching a spring there fly up two tiny figures, which, with fluttering wings, seem to devour each other with kisses."

Words which forced themselves out of her in spite of her shyness, but which she could not follow up by more than a side-look at her admirer.

"And upon which," said he, still smiling, "there is engraven the inscription, 'From Walter Grierson to Agnes Ainslie.'"

"Yes," sighed Rachel, "the very words. I read them again and again, and could scarcely believe my eyes."

"And well you might not," said he; "but your simple heart has never yet informed you that love finds out strange inventions. I have been guilty of a *ruse d'amour*, for which I beg your pardon. Knowing that you were in the habit of visiting Paul's workroom, and seeing all the work of his cunning fingers, I got him to make the locket out of a piece of gold I got from my uncle, and the inscription was,"—and here he paused as if to watch her expression,—"yes, designed 'to quicken your affection for me by awakening jealousy. I confess it. Agnes Ainslie was and is nothing to me; and I used her name merely because I thought that you would view her as a likely rival."

"Can all this be true?" muttered Rachel to herself, as the wish to believe was pursued by the doubt which revolted against a departure from all natural and rational actions.

Perhaps she was not versed in the ways of the world; but whether so or not, the difference in effect would have been small; for what man, beloved by a woman, ever yet pled his cause before his mistress without other than a wise man for his client?

"And if it is your wish, my dear Rachel," he continued, "the inscription shall be erased, and replaced by the name of Rachel Grierson. What say you?"

His hand was held out for that acceptance which betokened consent. It was accepted; yes, and more. His arms were next moment around her waist; the heart of the yielding girl beat rarely, the wistful face

was turned up as even courting his eyes, the kiss was impressed;—why, more, Rachel Grierson was surely Walter Grierson's, and he was hers, and surely to be for ever in this world.

Rachel was now in that state of mind when the pleasantness of a contemplated object excludes any inquiry whether it is true or false, good or evil; and, in spite of Paul's fatalism, she was satisfied that it was with Walter's own free will that he had done what he had done, and said what he had said. The changed inscription on the locket, and the delivery of that pledge to her, would complete the vowing of the troth whereby she was to become his wife. Entirely ignorant of what had taken place between the nephew and the uncle, by means of which she might have been able to analyze his conduct, she had only the closeting of Mr. Ainslie and Walter to suggest to her that the young man's sudden declaration was the result of his knowledge that she was to be sole heiress. The heart that is under the influence of love, as we have hinted, is too credulous to the tongue of the lover to doubt the sincerity of his professions. So all appeared well. The motives in action were adequate to the will of the parties who used them; and as she felt that her love was in the power of herself, so she could not doubt that Walter's affection was the result of his approval of her good qualities. Paul was now no longer an oracle. She would be pleased to have an opportunity of showing him that his genius lay more in his fingers than in his head. She had now, however, something else to do. She went to her father's room. He was in one of those reveries to which, as we have said, all the thinking of the extremely aged is reduced, when the world and its figures of men and women, its strange oscillations and changes, its passions, pleasures, and pains, seem as

made remote by the intervention of a long space—dim, shadowy, and ghost-like. It is one of the stages through which the long-living must pass, and, like all the other experiences of life, it is true only to one's self—it cannot be communicated by words. "Old memories are spectres that do seem to chase the soul out of the world,"—an old quotation which may be admitted without embracing the metaphysical paradox, that "subjective thought is the poison of life," or conceding the sharp sneer of the cynic—

"Know, ye who for your pleasures gape,
Man's life at best is but a scrape."

But the entry of his daughter brought the old man back to the margin of real living existences. He held out his hand to her, and smiled in the face that was dear to him, as if for a moment he rejoiced in the experience of a feeling which connected him with breathing flesh and blood. The object of her visit was soon explained. Whispering in his ear, as if she were afraid of the sound of her own words, she told him that Walter had promised her a love-token, and that she wished to give him one in return, for which purpose she desired that she might be permitted to use one or two old "Spanish ounces" that lay in the old bureau.

"Yes, yes, dear child," said he. "Get a golden heart made of them. It will be an emblem of the true heart you have to give him, and a pledge to boot." Then, falling into one of his reveries, in which his mind seemed occupied by some strong feeling—"I am thus reminded," he continued, "of the old song you used to sing. There is a verse which I hope will never be applicable to you as it was to me. I wish to hear it for the last time," he added, with a languid smile, "in consideration of the ounces."

Rachel knew the verse, because she had formerly

noticed that it moved some chord in his memory connected with an old love affair in which his heart had been scathed ; but she hesitated, for the meaning it conveyed was dowie and ominous.

“ Come, come,” said he, “ the fate will never be yours.”

She complied, yet it was with a trembling voice. The tune is at best but a sweet wail, and there was a misgiving of the heart which imparted the thrilling effect of a gipsy’s farewell—

“ If I had wist ere I had kisst,
That true love was so ill to win,
I’d have lock’d my heart in some secret part,
And bound it with a silver pin.”

“ Now you may take the ounces,” said he with a sigh. “ The verse has more meaning to me than you wot off, and surely, I hope, less to you.”

And having thus gratified his whim—if that could be called a whim which was a desire to have repeated to him a sentiment once to him, as he hinted, a reality connected with the young heart when it was lusty, and his pulse strong and thick with the blood of young life—she went to the bureau, and, taking three of the ounces, she left the room. In the gloaming, she was again on her way to Paul’s workshop, where she found the artist, as usual, with his head bent over the bright desk on the bench, engaged in some of his fanciful creations. Having seated herself in the chair where she had so often sat, she commenced her story of the circumstances of the day,—how Walter Grierson had acted and spoken to her ; how he had accounted for the locket and inscription ; how he intended to change the latter, and substitute her name for that of Agnes Ainslie ; how he had sought her love, and succeeded in

his seeking ; how she was satisfied that he was sincere in his professions ; and how she had got the ounces from her father to make a love-token, to give in exchange for Walter's. All which Paul listened to with deep attention, now and then a faint smile passing over his delicate face, and followed by the old pensive expression which was peculiar to one so deeply imbued with the conviction that he was an organism in nature's plan, acted upon to fulfil a fate of which he could know nothing.

"And so the powers work," said he, as he looked in the hopeful face of his friend. "You are now happy, Rachel, because you believe what Walter has said to you, and you have no power over your belief. But," he continued, after a moment or two's silence, "I *may* have power over you, but not over myself. Walter Grierson has told you a falsehood, and his motive for it is adequate to his nature. Since he gave me the order for the locket, he has learnt that you are to inherit the whole fortune of your father, on the condition that you are to marry him ; and his love for Agnes has been overborne by another feeling—the desire to possess your wealth. Neither the one nor the other of these feelings could he manufacture, or even modify, any more than he could charm the winds into silence, or send Jove's bolt back to its thunder-cloud ; and now, look you, his game is this : if you succeed to the money, he will marry without loving you ; if not, he will marry the woman he loves—Agnes Ainslie."

"You alarm me, Paul," said she, involuntarily holding forth her arms, as if she would have stopped his speech.

"And you cannot help your alarm," said he calmly ; "neither can I help *not* being alarmed by your alarm."

"Oh, you trifle with my feelings," she cried, with a

kind of wail. "What have all these strange thoughts to do with this situation in which I am placed? Even though all things are pre-ordained, neither of us can be absolved from doing our duty to God and ourselves."

"Absolved!" echoed Paul. "Why, Rachel, look you, we are forced to do it, or not to do it, precisely as the motive culminates into action, but we are not sensible of the compulsion; and so am I under the necessity to tell you that Walter Grierson is playing false with you, according to the inexorable law of his nature. It is not an hour yet since Agnes Ainslie called here with some old trinkets, and requested me to make a ring out of them; nor was I left without the means of understanding that it was to be given in exchange for the locket."

"Is it possible?" cried she. "And can it be that I am deceived, and that secret powers are working my ruin?"

"Not necessarily your ruin," said he; "no mortal knows the birth of the next moment. The womb of fate is never empty; but no man shall dare to say what is in it till the issue of every moment proves itself. Nor does all this take away hope, for hope is in the ancient decree, like all the other evolutions of time, including that hope's being deferred till the heart grows sick; and," he added, as he looked sorrowfully into her face, "that is the fate of mine, for, know you, Rachel Grierson, I have long loved you, and have now seen that the riches you are to inherit put you beyond the sphere of my ambition. I have often wished—pardon me, Rachel—yes, I have often wished you might be left a beggar, that I might have the privilege of using the invention with which I am gifted to astonish the world by my handiwork, and bring wealth to her I loved."

"I am surrounded on all sides by difficulties," sighed

the young woman, as she seemed to find herself in the mazes of an unseen destiny. As she looked at her cousin, she thought that one of her evils was that the capture of her affections so early by Walter had prevented her from viewing Paul in any other light than that of an ingenious artist, and a man of kindly sympathies, however much he was separated from mankind by a theory of the world too esoteric for ordinary thought, and which yet, at some time of man's life, forces its way amidst palpitations of fear to every heart.

On reaching home she met there the notary, Mr. Ainslie, who informed her, probably at the request of her father (for information of that kind is seldom given gratuitously), that the will had been signed, and left in the possession of the old man. Even this communication, so calculated to shake from the heart so many of the sorrows of life, had no greater effect upon her generous nature than to increase the responsibility of fulfilling the condition upon which the inheritance was to be received and held. If she had not been under the effect of an early prepossession in favour of Walter, she might have doubted the sincerity of his statement, as it came from his own mouth. Suspicion attached to every word of it; but after the communication made by Paul, it was scarcely possible for her to resist the conclusion that he had told her a falsehood, and that he was aiming at the fortune, without the power or the inclination to give her in return his love; nay, that he was heartlessly sacrificing to his passion for gold two parties—the object of his real love, and that of his feigned. Yet she did not resist that conclusion; and so good an analyst was she of her own mind, that even when in the very act of throwing away these suspicions of his honesty, she knew in her soul that her love was in successful conflict with an array of evidence estab-

lishing the fact which she disregarded. Then the consciousness of this inability to cease loving the man whom she could hardly doubt to be a liar, as well as heartless and mercenary, brought up to her the strange theory of Paul. The motive which no man or woman could make or even modify, was the prime spring as well as ruler of the will, cropping out, to use his own words, from moral, if not also physical causes, laid when God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." A deeper thinker than most of her sex, she felt "the sublimity in terror" of this view of God's ways with man. If she could not resist the resolution to love Walter, how could he resist the love he bore to another? The thought shook her to the heart; nor was she less pained when she reflected on the hapless Paul, with his long-concealed affection, so pure from the sordidness of a desire for money, that he would have toiled for her under the flame of the midnight lamp, continued into the light of the rising sun.

During the night the persistency of her resolution to remain by her past affection was maintained; yet as it was still merely a persistency implying the continuance of a foe ready to assert the old rights, she was so far unhappy that she wanted that composure of mind which consists in the absence of conflict among one's own thoughts.

In the morning she found the locket lying on her parlour table, with the inscription changed from Agnes Ainslie to Rachel Grierson. She took it up and fixed her eyes upon it. At one time she would have given the world for it; now it attracted her and repelled her. It came from the only man she loved; but another name had been on it, which ought, for aught she could be sure of, to have been on it still. It might be the pledge of affection, but it might also be the evidence of

falsehood to her and unfaithfulness to another. And then, as she traced the lines of her name, she thought she could discover the signs of a tremulousness in the hand that traced them. Amidst all these thoughts and conflicting feelings, she could not help recurring to the circumstance that he had not presented the locket with his own hands. She was unwilling to indulge in an unfavourable construction; and perhaps the more so that it so far pleased her as relieving her from the dilemma of accepting it with more coldness than her love warranted, or more warmth than her reason allowed. Nay, though she gloated over his image when she was alone, she felt an undefined fear of meeting him. Might he not be precipitated into some further defence or confession, which might fortify suspicions still battling against her prepossessions, and diminish her love? Nor was this disinclination towards personal interviews confined to this day—it continued; and it seemed as if he also wished his connection with her to stand in the meantime upon the pledges and confessions already made. This she could also notice; but as for rendering a true reason for it, she couldn't, even with the great ability she possessed in construing conduct and character.

But meanwhile time was accumulating antagonistic forces which would explode in a consummation. Her thoughts were to be occupied by another, who claimed her affections and care by an appeal as powerful as it was without guile. Her father was seized with paralysis. He was laid speechless on the bed where she sat, a watchful and affectionate nurse, ready to sacrifice sleep and peace and rest to the wants of him who, all through her life, had been her friend and benefactor, and who had provided for her future days at the expense of hopes entertained by his legitimate heirs. For three

days he had lain without speaking a word, and Rachel could only guess his wants by mute signs. During all this time her thoughts had scarcely glanced at Walter. He seemed anxious about the condition of his uncle, calling repeatedly at the bedroom door, and going away without entering. But his manner indicated no affection, if it did not rather seem that he considered the old man had done his worst against him, and that sorrow was not due from one he had disinherited. Her affections were too much engrossed by her patient to permit her thinking of what was being transacted in the outside world. Yet, when she looked upon the face of the invalid, so pale and motionless, where so long the shades of grief and the lights of joy had chased each other, by the old decree of human destiny, the words of Paul would occur to her. Was the death that was there impending the result of a more necessary law than that which had ruled every other condition of body or mind which had ever been experienced by the patient sufferer? Then there came the question, Could Walter Grierson so regulate his heart as to force it to love her in preference to Agnes Ainslie? Could she, Rachel herself, so rule her feelings as to cease loving the man she still suspected of falsehood and treachery? It was even while she was thus ruminating over thoughts that made her tremble, that she observed, on the third night, a change in her patient. He seemed to start by the advent of some recollection. His body became restless, and he waved his hand wildly, as if he wanted her to bend over him, to hear what he might struggle to say. She immediately obeyed the sign. He fixed his eyes upon her, made efforts to articulate, which resulted only in a thick, broken gibberish. She could only catch one or two indistinct words, from which it seemed that he wished to tell her *where she would find the will*;

but the precise phrase whereby he wished to indicate the deposit was pronounced in such an imperfect manner that she could not make it out. Strangely enough, yet still consistently with the generosity of her character, she did not like to pain him by indicating that she did not understand him. Nay, she nodded pleasantly, as if she wanted him to be easy, under the satisfaction that he had succeeded in his efforts to articulate. Yet so far was she from thinking of the importance of the communication to herself, that she flattered him into the belief that, as he could now speak so as to be understood, he was in the way of improving. Alas for the goodness which is evil to the heart that produces it!

“There are of plants
That die of too much generosity—
Exhaling their sweet life in essences.”

Paul would have said that this too was a cropping out of the old causal strata. In two hours more, David Grierson was dead, and Rachel was left to mourn for her parent and benefactor.

Now the issues were accumulating. A very short time only was allowed to elapse before Mr. Ainslie, accompanied by Walter, came to seal up the repositories; an operation which was gone through in a manner which indicated that both of them thought they were locking up and making secure that which would destroy their hopes. They seemed under the conviction that the will was in the bureau; and if they had been men otherwise than merely what, as the world goes, are called honest, they might have abstracted the document; for the generous Rachel never even looked at their proceedings, grieved as she was at the death of her father. They were, at least, above that.

In a few days David Grierson was consigned to the

earth, and, after the funeral, Mr. Ainslie, accompanied by Walter, again attended to open the repositories and read the testament. Rachel agreed to be present. When the seals were removed, she was asked by the notary if she knew where the document was deposited. She now felt the consequence of the easy manner in which she had let slip the opportunity so dearly offered by her father, of knowing the *locale* of a writ in all respects so important; for it cannot be doubted that, if she had persevered, she might have succeeded in drawing out of him the word, articulated so as that she might have comprehended it. She accordingly, yet without any anticipation of danger, answered in the negative, whereupon the notary and nephew, who seemed to be on the most friendly terms, set about a search. Rachel remained. A whole hour was passed in the search; the will was not yet found. Every drawer of the bureau was examined,—the presses, the cabinets, the table-drawers, the trunks. And so another hour passed—no will. Rachel began to get alarmed, and perhaps the more that she saw upon the faces of the searchers an expression which she could not comprehend. Their spirits seemed to have become elated as hers became depressed; yet why should that have been, if Walter Grierson was to be “true to his troth?”

“We need search no more,” said Mr. Ainslie. “The will is not in the house. I should say it is not in existence, and that Mr. Grierson, having changed his mind, had destroyed it.”

“Not so,” replied Rachel, “for a few minutes before his death he tried to tell me where it was, but the name of the place died away upon his tongue, and I could not catch it.”

“Neither can we catch the deed,” said Walter, with a laugh which had a spice of irony in it.

And so the search was given up. The two searchers left the house, apparently in close conversation. Rachel sought her room and threw herself on a sofa, oppressed by doubts and fears which she could not very well explain. The manner of Walter appeared to her not to be that of one who was pledged to marry her. Her mind ran rapidly back over doubtful reminiscences which yielded no comfort to the heart; nay, she felt that he had never been as a lover to her; and far less that day when, as it appeared, he was to be master of his uncle's wealth. Yet again comes the thought, Was he pledged to her? Ay, that was certain enough; and then she was so little versed in the subtle ways of the world, that she could not doubt of his being "true to his troth."

As soon as she recovered from her meditation, she sought again the workroom of the artist, to whom she told the issue of the search for the will. Paul looked at first greatly struck, but under his strange philosophy he recovered that calmness which belongs to those of his way of thinking.

"Have I not often preached to you, Rachel," said he, as he lay back on his chair, "that all these things were fixed ere Sirius was born? Yea," he added, as a smile played amid the seriousness of his face, "ere yet there was a space for the dog-star to wag his tail. The crop-pings out will now come thick, and you will know whether you are to be a lady or a beggar."

Rachel might have known that the consolation offered by fatalists is only the recommendation of a resignation which, as fated itself, is gloomy, if not awful, for it amounts to an annihilation of self, with all hopes, energies, and resolutions. She heard his words, and forgave him, if she did not believe him; for she knew that he was true in his friendship, and benevolent in

his feelings—parts these, too, as he would have said, of the decree. She left him in a condition of sadness for which she could not yet account, and the hues of her mind seemed to be projected on all objects around her. She retired to rest; but she could not banish from her mind that the realities of her condition required to be read by the blue light of Paul's philosophy. It was far in the morning before she fell asleep; and when nine came she felt unrested. The servant came in to her and told her the hour. The breakfast was ready; but Walter, who had not returned on the prior night, was not as usual waiting for her. The announcement was ominously in harmony with the thoughts she had tried to banish. She scarcely touched the breakfast, and the day passed in expectation of Walter. Night came, but it did not bring him. The next day passed in the same way. People called to condole without knowing how much she stood in need of condolence; but still no Walter came to redeem the pledge of his love. Yet still she hoped; nor till an entire month had gone over her head did she renounce her confidence that he would be "true to his troth."

At the end of this period Paul advised her to take counsel. He told her that the law had remedies for losses of deeds; and she accordingly consulted a legal gentleman of the name of Cleghorn. The result was not favourable. It appeared that Mr. Ainslie denied that there was any copy or scroll of the will, through the means of which it might have been "set up," by what is called a proving of the tenor. There was no hope here, and by-and-by she saw advertised in the *Caledonian Mercury* that the furniture of the house was to be sold within a week. She was there on mere tolerance; and now she had got a clear intimation to flit. As for money or effects, she had none, except her

wardrobe, for she never thought of providing for an exigency which she was satisfied never would occur. Again she applied to Paul, who, with her consent, went and took for her a solitary room in the close we have already mentioned. It was her intention to acquire a livelihood by means of her needle, at that time almost the only resource for genteel poverty. Some articles of furniture were got, principally by Paul ; and there, two days before the sale, she took up her residence. Nor did the kindness of Paul stop here. He attended the sale, and, considerately judging that some articles belonging to her father would be acceptable to her, he purchased, for a small sum, the old bureau of which we have already spoken. The article was removed to Rachel's room.

For a period of fifteen years did Rachel Grierson live in that room plying her needle to obtain for her a subsistence. Her story, which came to be known, procured her plenty of work ; and the ten fingers, which were sufficiently employed, sufficed for the wants of the stomach,—small these wants, probably, in her who had heard of the marriage of Walter with Agnes Ainslie ; yea, she who could bear to hear that intelligence might claim a right to be a pupil of Paul's school of philosophy. Paul she indeed loved as a friend, but she never could bring herself to the resolution of marrying the little artist. There was a train of evils : the “croppings out” of her fate, as Paul called it, were thick enough and to spare ; for she fell into bad health, which was the precursor of a fit of palsy, depriving her for ever of the power of working for herself. Then it was that Paul's affection was shown more clearly than ever. Day by day he brought her all the food she required ; but at length he himself was taken ill, and his absence was fatal. Pride prevented her from making

her necessity known to the neighbours, with whom she had but little intercourse. We have told how she was found dead ; and when we say that Paul recovered to be present at her funeral, we have only one fact more to state. It is this : Paul took the old bureau home to his own little room, to keep as a memorial of the only woman he ever loved. One day, when repairing the internal drawers, he found in a hollow perpendicular slip, which looked like a broad beading, a document which was thus entitled on the back :

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

BY

DAVID GRIERSON,

IN FAVOUR OF

RACHIEL GRIERSON.

1778.

LADY RAE.

DURING the time that Oliver Cromwell was in Edinburgh, a lady called one day at his lodgings and solicited an interview. She was closely wrapped up in a large and loose mantle, and deeply veiled. The former, however, did not conceal a shape of singular elegance, nor mar the light and graceful carriage of the wearer. Both were exceedingly striking; and if the veil performed its duty more effectually than the mantle, by completely hiding the countenance of the future Protector's fair visitor, it was only to incite the imagination to invest that countenance with the utmost beauty of which the "human face divine" is susceptible. Nor would such creation of the fancy have surpassed the truth, for the veiled one was indeed "fair to look upon."

On its being announced to Cromwell that a lady desired an interview with him, he, in some surprise, demanded who and what she was. The servant could not tell. She had declined to give her name, or to say what was the purpose of her visit.

The Protector thought for a moment, and as he did so, kept gazing, with a look of abstraction, in the face of his valet. At length—

"Admit her, Porson, admit her," he said. "The Lord sends his own messengers in his own way; and if we deny them, He will deny us."

Porson, who was one of Cromwell's most pious soldiers—for he served in the double capacity of warrior and

valet—stroked his sleek hair down over his solemn brow, and uttered a sonorous “amen” to the unconnected and unintelligible observation of his master, who, it is well known, dealt much in this extraordinary sort of jargon.

Having uttered his lugubrious amen, Porson withdrew, and in a few minutes returned, conducting the lady, of whom we have spoken, into the presence of Cromwell.

On entering the apartment, the former threw aside her veil, and discovered a countenance of such cunning charms as moved the future Protector to throw into his manner an air of unwonted gallantry.

At the lady’s first entrance he was busy writing, and had merely thrown down his pen when she appeared, without intending to carry his courtesy any further; but he had no sooner caught a sight of the fair face of his visitor, than, excited by an involuntary impulse, he rose from his chair and advanced towards her, smiling and bowing most graciously; the latter, however, being by no means remarkable either for its ease or its elegance.

“Pray, madam,” now said Cromwell, still looking the agreeable—so far as his saturnine features would admit of such expression—“to what happy circumstance am I indebted for the honour of this visit?”

“The circumstance, sir, that brings me here is by no means a happy one,” replied the lady, in tones that thrilled even the iron nerves of Oliver Cromwell. “I am Lady Rae, General; the wife of John Lord Rae, at present a prisoner in the Tolbooth of Edinburgh for his adherence to the cause of the late king.”

“Ah, my Lady Rae, I am sorry for you—sorry for you indeed; but doubtless you have found consolation in the same source whence your afflictions have sprung. Truly may I reckon—indeed may I, doubtless—that the

Lord, who has seen fit to chastise you, has also comforted you under this dispensation."

"None, Sir General, who seek the aid of the Almighty in a true spirit ever seek that aid in vain," replied Lady Rae; "and I have been a seeker, and have found; nor have I, I trust, been wanting on this occasion in a due submission to his will."

"Truly, I hope not; indeed do I," replied Cromwell. "Then, what would ye with me, fair lady? What would ye with one so feeble and humble as I am, who am but as a tool, a mean instrument in the hand of the artificer?" And the speaker assumed a look of the deepest humility.

"I dare not utter it! I dare not utter it, General!" exclaimed Lady Rae, now giving way, for the first time, to that emotion which was agitating her whole frame, although she had hitherto endeavoured, and not unsuccessfully, to conceal it. "I dare not utter it," she said, "lest it should bring death to my hopes; yet came I hither for no other purpose."

"Speak, lady, speak," said Cromwell. "What would'st thou with me?"

Lady Rae flung herself on her knees, and exclaimed, with upraised countenance and streaming eyes—

"Save my husband, General! Restore him to liberty and to me; and thus, on my knees, shall I daily offer up prayers to heaven for thy safety and prosperity. Oh refuse me not!—refuse me not, General, as thou thyself hopest for mercy from thy God in the hour of retribution!" And she wildly grasped the knees of the republican commander.

Without saying a word, Cromwell gently disengaged himself from the fair suppliant, and, turning his back upon her, stalked to the further end of the apartment, seemingly much agitated.

On gaining the extremity of the room, Cromwell stood for two or three minutes, still keeping his back to Lady Rae, with arms folded, and drooping his head, as if musing deeply. At the expiry of this period, he suddenly turned round, and advancing towards his fair visitor with quick and hurried step, said—

“My Lady Rae, may the Lord direct me in this matter and in all others. I have been communing with myself anent your petition; truly have I, but see not that I can serve thee; I cannot indeed. If we would all walk in the straight path, we had need to walk warily; for in this matter I cannot help thee, seeing my Lord Rae is a State prisoner, and I have no power over him; none, truly, none whatever. The law is strong, and may not be trifled with. But I will consider, fair lady, indeed will I; I will seek direction and counsel in the matter from on high. I will do so this night; I will have this night to think of the matter, and thou wilt call upon me at this hour to-morrow, and I will then see if the Lord will vouchsafe me any light as to how I may assist thee and thy poor husband; for on thy account I would do so if I could.”

Confused, and all but wholly unintelligible, as was this address of Cromwell's, Lady Rae perceived that it contained a gleam of comfort, that a ray of hope-inspiring light, however feeble, played through its obscurity; and, satisfied with this, she urged her suit no further, but, with a thankful acceptance of the Parliamentary general's invitation to her to wait upon him on the following day, she withdrew.

On Lady Rae issuing from Cromwell's lodgings, she stood in the street, gazing around her for an instant, as if looking for some one whom she had expected to find waiting her, but who was not at the moment in sight. This was the case; but it was only for a moment that

she was so detained. She had glanced but two or three times around her, when she was joined by a personage of very striking appearance. This was a huge Highlander, considerably above six feet in stature, proportionably stout and well made, and apparently of enormous strength. He was dressed in the full costume of his country, and armed to the teeth. By his side depended a tremendous claymore; in his belt were stuck a dagger and a brace of pistols; and on his shoulder rested that formidable weapon called a Lochaber axe.

The countenance of this tremendous personage was in keeping with his other charms: it was manly, and decidedly handsome, but withal was marked with an expression of fierceness that was appalling to look upon; and was thus calculated, when associated with his gigantic figure, to inspire at once admiration and fear.

As this formidable personage approached Lady Rae, he touched his bonnet with an air of the most profound respect, and assumed a look and attitude of devoted attention to her commands.

"I have seen him, John," said Lady Rae, addressing her Goliath of an attendant, who was neither more nor less than a retainer of Lord Rae's, but one who stood high in the estimation of both the former and the latter for his fidelity, and, fierce as he looked, for the gentleness of his nature. John M'Kay—for such was his name—was, in short, an especial favourite of both Lord and Lady Rae, and was admitted to a degree of confidence and familiarity that elevated him much above his real condition. They were proud, too, of his superb figure, and delighted to exhibit him in the full dress of his country, as a specimen of the men which it produced. "I have seen him, John," said Lady Rae, whose

protector and attendant John always was when she went forth on occasions of business of importance like the present.

"And what he'll say, my letty?" inquired John in a low and gentle tone, and stopping to catch Lady Rae's communication.

"Not much that is quite satisfactory, John. He speaks in a strange style, but I think there is ground of hope. He did not altogether refuse the prayer of my petition, but bade me call upon him again to-morrow."

John looked grave, but made no reply. His lady walked on, and he followed at a respectful distance.

The former now directed her steps to a locality in the city with which she was but too familiar, and which she had had occasion of late but too often to frequent. This was the Tolbooth—the place of her husband's confinement.

On reaching the outer entrance to the jail, the low half-door, thickly studded with huge-headed nails, by which it was temporarily secured during the day, was immediately thrown open for her admission by the turnkey—a little crusty-looking personage in a fur cap—who had been leaning over it, listlessly looking around him, on her ladyship's approach. As the latter entered the prison door, the former stood to one side, doffed his little fur cap, and respectfully wished her ladyship a good morning.

"How are you to-day, James?" said Lady Rae in kindly tones; "and how is my lord?"

"Quite well, my lady, quite well," replied the little turnkey, extremely proud, seemingly, of the condescension of her ladyship. The latter passed on, and commenced threading her way through the tortuous but well-known passages which led to her husband's

prison-room. John M'Kay followed his mistress into the jail, previously leaving his arms at the door—a condition to which he had always to submit before gaining admission. Having denuded himself of his weapons, John also passed on, but not before he had shaken his fist ominously in the face of the little jailer. This was John's constant practice every time he entered the prison; and, simple as the act was, it had a good deal of meaning. It meant, in the first place, that John associated the misfortune of his master's confinement with the little turnkey's employment; that he considered him as aiding and abetting in the same. It further meant, that if it were not for one thing more than another, or, as John himself would have expressed it, "for todder things more nor ones," he would have brought his Lochaber axe and the turnkey's head into more intimate contact.

In the meantime, Lady Rae having ascended several flights of dark and narrow stairs, and traversed several passages of a similar description, had arrived at a particular door, on either side of which stood a grenadier, with shouldered musket and bayonet fixed. They were the guards placed upon her husband, who occupied the apartment which they sentinelled.

The soldiers, who had orders to admit her ladyship and attendant to the prisoner at any time between the hours of nine in the morning and seven at night, offered no hindrance to her approaching the door and rapping for admittance. This she now did; and the "Who's there?" of the captive was replied to in a powerfully Celtic accent by John M'Kay, with—"My Letty Rae, my lort." The door instantly flew open, and its inmate came forth, with a smiling and delighted countenance, to receive his beautiful and faithful wife.

In the meantime, John M'Kay took his station on the

outside of the door—a more friendly guard over the inmates of the apartment to which it conducted than those who stood on either side of him. Here the same feeling which had dictated John's significant hint to the turnkey below, suggested his general bearing and particular manner to the two soldiers now beside him.

Maintaining a profound and contemptuous silence, he strutted up and down the passage—without going, however, more than two or three yards either way—in front of the door of his lordship's apartment, keeping his huge form proudly erect, as he thus paced the short walk to which he had limited himself, and casting, every now and then, a look of fierce defiance on the appalled soldiers, who looked with fear and dread on the chafed lion with whom they found themselves thus unpleasantly caged, and who seemed every moment as if he would spring upon and tear them to pieces; and, in truth, little provocation would it have taken to have brought John M'Kay's huge fists into play about their heads. There can be no doubt that there was nothing at that moment which would have given John more satisfaction than their affording him an excuse for attacking them. This, however, the soldiers carefully avoided; and, not content with refraining from giving the slightest offence, either in word, look, or deed, endeavoured to conciliate John by an attempt to lead him into friendly conversation. But the attempt was in vain. Their advances were all repelled, either with silent contempt or with a gruff uncourteous response. A specimen of the conversation which did take place between M'Kay and the guards may be given:—

“Delightful day, friend!” said one of the soldiers.

“S'pose it is!” replied John sternly, and continuing his walk.

A pause.

"Anything new in the town to-day?" at length said the other soldier.

"S'pose something new every tay!" replied John gruffly.

"Ay, ay, I dare say; but have *you* anything new to tell us?"

"Maype I have," said John, with a grim smile.

"What is it?"

"Tat I'll knock your tam thick head against tat wall if you'll pe botter me wi' any more o' your tam nonsense. Tat's news for you!" and John gave one of those peculiar Celtic grunts which no combination of letters can express. "And you, you scarecrow-looking rascal," he continued, addressing the other sentinel, "if you'll spoke anoder word, I'll cram my sporran doon your dam troat."

Having delivered himself of these friendly addresses, John resumed his march, with additional pride of step and bearing. In a minute after, he was summoned into Lord Rae's apartment, where he remained until Lady Rae left the prison, which she did in a short time afterwards.

It was with a beating heart and anxious mind that Lady Rae wended her way, on the following day—attended, as usual, by her gigantic serving-man—to the lodgings of Oliver Cromwell. On reaching the house, M'Kay took his station, as on a former occasion, on the outside, while her ladyship advanced towards the door, within which she speedily disappeared, her admittance having been more prompt on the present visit than the former.

In an instant after, Lady Rae was again in the presence of Oliver Cromwell. As on the former occasion, he was employed in writing when she entered, and as

on that occasion, so also he threw down his pen, and rose to receive her.

"Anent this matter of yours, my lady," began Cromwell abruptly, and without any previous salutation, although he looked all civility and kindness, "I really hardly know what to say; truly do I not; but the Lord directs all, and He will guide us in this thing also."

"I trust so!" interrupted Lady Rae, meekly.

"Yes," resumed the future Protector of England; "for we are but weak creatures, short-sighted and erring. But indeed, as I told you before, my lady, your husband is a State prisoner; truly is he, and therefore may I not interfere with him. I cannot; I have not the power. Yet would I serve thee if I could; truly would I with great pleasure. But these, you see, are strange times, in which all men must walk warily; for we are beset with enemies, with traitors—deceivers on all sides, men who fear not the Lord. Yet, for this matter of yours, my Lady Rae, I will tell you: I cannot take your husband from prison; it would be unseemly in the sight of all God-fearing men; but truly, if you could in any ways manage to get his lordship once without the prison walls, I would take upon me to prevent his being further troubled. He should have a protection under my hand; truly he should, although it might bring me to some odium with my friends. But he should have it, nevertheless, out of my respect for you, my lady. Now go, go, my lady; I may say no more on the subject. Go, try and fall on some means of getting thy husband without the walls of his prison; this done, come instantly to me, and thou shalt have a protection for him under my hand; indeed thou shalt."

To Lady Rae, this proposal was a grievous dis-

appointment. It contained an arrangement which she had never contemplated, and which seemed as impracticable as it was strange; yet she saw it was all she had to expect, and that whatever might be the result, she must be content with the extent of interference on her husband's behalf, which was included in the singular measures suggested by Cromwell.

Impressed with this conviction, Lady Rae thanked him for his kindness, said she would endeavour to get her husband without the prison gates by some means or other, and would then again wait upon him for the protection he was so generous as to offer.

"Do so, my lady, do so," said Cromwell, escorting her ladyship to the door with an air of great gallantry; "and may the Lord have thee in his holy keeping."

Lady Rae turned round, again thanked the general, curtsied, and withdrew.

On reaching the street, her ladyship was instantly joined by her faithful attendant M'Kay, who had been waiting with the greatest anxiety and impatience for her return; for to him his master's life and liberty were dearer far than his own, and he well knew that both were much in the power of the extraordinary man on whom his lady was now waiting.

On the first glance which he obtained of his mistress's countenance, John saw, with a feeling of disappointment that lengthened his own several inches, that the interview had not been a satisfactory one. His native sense of politeness, however, and of the deference due to his mistress, prevented him making any inquiries as to what had passed until she should herself choose to communicate with him on the subject. For such communication, however, he had longer to wait than usual; for, lost in thought and depressed with disappointment, Lady Rae walked on a good way with-

out taking any notice whatever of her attendant, who was following at a distance of several yards. At length she suddenly stopped, but without turning round. This John knew to be the signal for him to advance. He accordingly did so, and, touching his bonnet, waited for the communication which it promised.

"I am afraid, John," now said Lady Rae—"I am afraid we shall be disappointed, after all. The general has made the strangest proposal you ever heard. He says that he cannot, without compromising himself, or to that effect, liberate his lordship from jail; but that if he were once out—that is, if he could be got out by any means—he would save him from being further troubled, and would grant him a protection under his own hand. But how on earth are we to get him out? It is impossible. These two guards at the door, besides other difficulties, render it altogether impracticable. I know not what is to be done."

It was some seconds before M'Kay made any reply. At length—

"I'll no think ta difficulty fery crate, after all, my letty," replied John. "There's shust ta bodachan at ta dore, I could put in my sporran, and ta twa soger."

"Yes, John; the first you might perhaps manage," said Lady Rae, smiling, and glancing unconsciously at the huge figure of her attendant, which presented so striking a contrast to that of the little, slim, crusty turnkey; "but the two soldiers—"

"Whoich," exclaimed John contemptuously; "if's no far prettier men than was there yesterday, it'll no trouble me much to manage them too, my letty. A wee bit clamsheuchar wi' my Lochaper axe, or a brog wi' my skean-dhu, will make them quate aneuch, my letty. Tat's but a small shob."

"John, John, no violence, no violence!" exclaimed

Lady Rae, in great alarm at the sanguinary view of the process for her husband's liberation which John had taken. "No violence. If his lordship's liberation be attempted at all, there must be no violence; at least none to the shedding of blood, or to the inflicting the smallest injury on any one. The idea is horrible; and, if acted on, would only make matters worse. Your own life, John, would be the forfeit of such an atrocious proceeding."

"Foich, a figs for tat, my letty, beggin' your lettyship's pardon," replied John, a good deal disappointed at the peaceful tone of his mistress, and at the loss of an opportunity, such as he had long desired, of taking vengeance on his master's guards and jailers. "Foich, a figs for tat, my letty, beggin' your lettyship's pardon," he said. "I could teuk to the hills in a moment's notice, and see who'll catch John M'Kay then."

"Well, well, perhaps, John, you might, but you must speak no more of violence; I charge you, speak no more of it. We will, in the meantime, go to his lordship and submit the matter to him, and be guided thereafter by his advice."

Having said this, Lady Rae directed her steps to the jail, and, closely followed by M'Kay, was soon after in the apartment of the prisoner.

Lord Rae having been apprised by his lady of the result of her interview with Cromwell, a secret consultation between the two, which lasted nearly an hour, ensued.

During this consultation, many different plans for effecting the liberation of the prisoner were suggested, and, after being duly weighed, abandoned as impracticable. One at length, however, was adopted, and this one was proposed by M'Kay; it was characteristic of

the man, and came as close in its nature to his original one as he durst presume upon.

This plan, which was a simple enough one, was to seize the two guards at the outside of the door, and to hold them fast until Lord Rae should have rushed past them and got out of the prison. The turnkey at the outer door, who, as has been already said, was a little slender man, his lordship was to seize and throw down, and then get over the little half-door, which was under his guardianship, the best way he could. A row of short, sharp pikes, however, with which it was fenced on its upper edge, rendered this a formidable difficulty; but it was thought that it might, to speak literally, be got over by the aid of a long form which stood on one side of the passage of the jail, for the accommodation of visitors.

All this trouble a touch of the key would have saved; but this the little man always carried in his pocket, never allowing it to remain in the lock an instant, however frequent or numerous his visitors might be.

The securing of the two guards at the prisoner's door, by far the most serious part of the business, M'Kay took upon himself, and with a degree of confidence that sufficiently showed how well he was aware of his own surpassing strength.

This plan of proceedings arranged, it was resolved that it should be put in execution that very afternoon. On that afternoon, accordingly, John M'Kay again appeared at the jail door, demanding admittance to his master. The door was immediately thrown open to him by the little turnkey, whom he now for the first time addressed in a friendly tone.

The same change of manner marked his salutation to the guards at the door of his master's apartment. To these he spoke in the most civil and obliging terms

possible. The men, who had often winced under his savage growls and fierce looks, wondered at the change, but were glad enough to meet with it in place of his former ferocity.

John, after talking for a few minutes with the sentinels, went into his lordship's room. The latter was dressed, and ready for the bold proceeding about to be adopted.

"Think you you can manage them, John?" said his lordship in a whisper, after the door had been secured in the inside.

"Pooch, a dizzen o' them, my lort!" replied M'Kay in the same under-tone. "It's twa bits o' shachlin' podies no wors speakin' about."

"But they are armed, John—they have guns and bayonets; and the former are loaded."

"Pooch, their guns! what'll sicknify their guns, my lort, when I'll have cot a hold o' the cratur's themsels in my hants?" and he held out his enormous brown paws as if to certify their power. "I'll crush the podies like a mussel shells."

"No violence, John, remember," said Lord Rae energetically, but smiling as he spoke,—“that is, to the extent of doing the men any, the smallest personal injury. Remember now, John; do otherwise,” continued his lordship in a more severe tone, “and you forfeit my favour and esteem for ever. Mark, John, besides,” added his lordship, who seemed most anxious on the point which he was now pressing on M'Kay's consideration, “your doing any injury to these men would be destruction to me; for, under such circumstances, the general would not grant me a protection after I was out, and my case would otherwise be rendered infinitely worse and more hopeless than it is. Now, remember all this, John, and do the men no personal injury, I charge you.”

John's face reddened a little at the earnestness with which these injunctions were delivered, and probably he thought they indicated something like degeneracy in his chief; but he promised compliance with his commands; and, to render his obedience more certain, by lessening the temptation to infringe them, he denuded himself of a concealed dirk, which he always carried about him, over and above the arms he openly wore. Of this proceeding, which was voluntary on M'Kay's part, his master highly approved, but, smiling, said—

“You have still your fists, John, nearly as dangerous weapons as that you have just laid aside; but I hope you will use them sparingly.”

John smiled, and promised he would.

In a few minutes afterwards M'Kay came forth from Lord Rae's apartment to perform the daring feat of securing two armed men by the mere force of physical strength; for he was now without weapon of any kind. When he came out, however, it was with an appearance of the most friendly feeling towards the soldiers. He came out smiling graciously, and entered into familiar chat with the men, alleging that he came to put off the time till his master had written a letter which he was to deliver to a person in town.

Thrown off their guard by M'Kay's jocular and cordial manner, the soldiers grounded their muskets, and began to enter in earnest into the conversation which he was promoting. M'Kay, in the meantime, was watching his opportunity to seize them; but this, as it was necessary he should be placed, with regard to them, so as to have one on either side of him, that he might grasp both at the same instant, he did not obtain for some time.

By dint, however, of some exceedingly cautious and wary manœuvring, M'Kay at length found himself in a

position favourable to his meditated proceedings. On doing so, he, with the speed and force of lightning, darted an arm out on either side of him, seized a soldier by the breast with each hand, and with as much ease as a powerful dog could turn over a kitten, laid them both gently on their backs on the floor of the passage, where he held them extended at full length, and immovable in his tremendous grasp, till he felt assured that Lord Rae had cleared the prison. This the latter effected with the most perfect success. The moment M'Kay seized the soldiers—an act of which Lord Rae was apprised by the former's calling out, "Noo, noo, my lort"—he rushed out, ran along the passage, descended the stair in three or four leaps, came upon the little turnkey unawares, as he was looking over the half-door of the prison entrance—his sole occupation during three-fourths of the day—seized him by the neck of the coat behind, laid him down, as M'Kay had done by the soldiers, at his full length—no great length after all—on the floor; drew the form to the door, placed it over the little turnkey in such a way as to prevent his rising, jumped on it, leapt into the street at one bound, and instantly disappeared. All this was done in the tenth part of the time that has been taken to relate it. It was, in truth, the work of but a moment.

On being satisfied that Lord Rae had made his escape—

"Noo, lads, ye may got up," said M'Kay, loosening his hold of the men, and starting himself to his feet. "Ta burd's flown; but ye may look after ta cage, and see tat no more o' your canaries got away."

Freed from the powerful grasp which had hitherto pinned them to the floor, the soldiers sprang to their feet, and endeavoured to get hold of their muskets.

Seeing this, M'Kay again seized them, and again threw them to the floor; but on this occasion it was merely to show the power he had over them, if they should still have any doubt of it.

"Noo, lads, I'll tell you what it is," said M'Kay, addressing the prostrate soldiers—"if you'll behave yourselves desenly, and no be botherin' me wi' ony more o' your tam nonsense, I'll aloo you to make me your prisoner; for I'm no intending to run away; I'll kive myself up to save your hides, and take my shance of ta law for what I'll do. Tat's my mind of it, lads. If you like to acree to it, goot and well; if not, I will knock your two heads togidder, till your prains go into smash."

But too happy to accept of such terms, the soldiers at once assented to them; and on their doing so, were permitted once more to resume their legs, when M'Kay peaceably yielded himself their prisoner. The gigantic Highlander could easily have effected his own escape; but he could not have done so without having recourse to that violence which had been so anxiously deprecated by both his master and mistress. Without inflicting some mortal injury on the soldiers, he could not have prevented them from pursuing him when he had fled, and probably firing on him as he did so. All this, therefore, had been provided for by the arrangements previously agreed upon by Lord Rae and his retainer. By these it was settled, that he should, on the former's making his escape, peaceably yield himself up to "underlie the law," in a reliance on the friendly disposition of Cromwell towards the fugitive, which, it was not doubted, would be exerted in behalf of his servant. Such proceeding, it was thought too, would bring Lord Rae's case sooner to issue; and be, with regard to the law, as it were, throwing a bone in the

dog's way to arrest his attention, and interrupt his pursuit of the original and more important object of his vengeance.

On delivering himself up, M'Kay was immediately placed in confinement, and shortly after brought to trial, for aiding and abetting in the escape of a State prisoner. The trial was a very brief one; for the facts were easily established, and sentence was about to be passed on the prisoner, when a stir suddenly arose at the court door. The presiding judge paused; the stir increased. In the next instant it was hushed; and in that instant Cromwell entered the court. On advancing a pace or two within the apartment, he took off his hat, bowed respectfully to the judges, and proceeding onwards, finally ascended the bench and took his seat beside them.

When a man feels himself master, he need be under no great ceremony; neither need he trouble himself much about forms or rules which regulate the conduct of inferiors. Cromwell, on this occasion, got up in a few minutes after he had taken his place, and delivered to the court a long, and, after his usual fashion, obscure and unconnected oration in favour of the prisoner at the bar. The chief ground, however, on which he rested his defence and exculpation of M'Kay, was the fidelity to his master, which the crime with which he was charge implied, and the worse effect to the cause of morality than good to the political interests of the State, which the infliction of any punishment in such case would produce. "If," concluded Cromwell, "fidelity to a master is to be punished as a crime, where shall we look for honest servants?"

The reasoning of Cromwell, even had it been less cogent than it was, could not be but convincing to those who knew of and dreaded his power. He was

listened to with the most profound attention, and the justness of his arguments and force of his eloquence acknowledged by the acquittal of the prisoner.

As M'Kay rose from his seat at the bar to leave the court, Cromwell eyed him attentively for some seconds, and, struck with his prodigious size and fierce aspect, whispered to one of the judges near him, "May the Lord keep me from the devil's and *that* man's grasp."

We have now only to add, that the protection promised by Cromwell to Lady Rae for her husband was duly made out, and delivered to her. We need not say that it was found to be a perfectly efficient document.

THE DIAMOND EYES.

WHEN I entered Edinburgh College the students were tolerably free from any of those clubs or parties into which some factitious subject—often a whim—divides them. In the prior year the spirit of wager had seized a great number of them with the harpy talons of the demon of gambling, giving rise to consequences prejudicial to their morals, as well as to their studies. A great deal of money among the richer of them changed hands upon the result of bets, often the most frivolous, if not altogether ridiculous. Now, we are not to say that, abstracted from the love of money, the act of betting is unqualifiedly bad, if rather we may not be able to say something for it, inasmuch as it sometimes brings out, and stamps ingenuity or sagacity, while it represses and chastises arrogance. But the practice at the College at that time was actually wild. They sought out subjects; the aye and the no of ordinary converse was followed by the gauntlet, which was taken up on the instant; and they even had an umpire in the club, a respectable young man of the name of Hawley, who was too wise to bet himself, but who was pleased with the honour of being privileged to decide the bets of the others.

In the heat of this wild enthusiasm, it happened that two of these youths, one called Henry Dewhurst, and the other Frank Hamilton, were walking on the jetty which runs out from the harbour of Leith a full mile into the Forth. Dewhurst was the son of a West

India planter, who allowed him £300 a year, every penny of which was spent in paying only a part of his bills long before the year was done ; one of which bills I had an opportunity of seeing, to my wonder—how any one could eat £15 worth of tarts and sweetmeats in the course of not many months ! Hamilton was the son of a west country proprietor, and enjoyed the privilege of using, to his ruin, a yearly allowance of £250. In the midst of their sauntering they hailed two of their friends,—one Campbell, a sworn companion of the young West Indian ; and the other Cameron, as closely allied to Hamilton ;—all the four being, as the saying goes, “birds of a feather,” tossing their wings in the gale of sprees, and not always sleeping in their own nests at night.

As they approached the end of the jetty, they met a lad who had wounded one of these large gulls called Tom Norries,—a beautiful creature, with its fine lead-coloured wings and charming snow-white breast, and eye like a diamond.

“I will give you a shilling for the bird,” said Dewhurst.

“But what are you to do with it ?” replied the lad. “I would not like it to be killed. It is only hurt in the wing ; and I will get half-a-crown for it from one who has a garden to keep it in.”

“No, no,” said Dewhurst, “I’ll not kill it. Here’s your half-crown.”

And the bargain was struck. Dewhurst, with the struggling bird in his hand, went down, followed by his friends, one of the side stairs to the stone rampart, by which the jetty is defended on the east. There they sat down. The sun was throwing a blaze of glory over a sea which repaid the gift with a liquid splendour scarcely inferior to his of fire ; and the companions of

the bird, swirling in the clear air, seemed to be attracted by the sharp cries of the prisoner ; but all its efforts were vain to gratify its love of liberty and their yearning. It was in the hands of those who had neither pity for its sufferings, consideration for the lessons it carried in its structure, nor taste for estimating its beauties. One of another kind of students might have detected adaptations in the structure of that creature sufficient to have raised his thoughts to the great Author of design and the source of all beauty;—that small and light body, capable of being suspended for a great length of time in the air by those broad wings, so that, as a bird of prey, it should watch for its food without the aid of a perch ; the feathers, supplied by an unctuous substance, to enable them to throw off the water and keep the body dry ; the web-feet for swimming ; and the long legs, which it uses as a kind of stay, by turning them towards the head when it bends the neck, to apply the beak—that beak, too, so admirably formed—for taking up entire, or perforating the backs of the silly fishes that gambol too near the surface. Ay, even in these fishes, which, venturing too far from their natural depths, and becoming amorous of the sun, and playful in their escapades, he might see the symbol of man himself, who, when he leaves the paths of prudence, and gets top-light with pleasure, is ready, in every culmination of his delirium, to be caught by a waiting retribution. Ah ! but our student, who held the bird, was not incurious—only cold and cruel in his curiosity.

“Hamilton,” said he, “that bird could still swim on the surface of that sea, though deprived of every feather on its body.”

“I deny it,” replied Hamilton. “It will not swim five minutes.”

“What do you bet?”—The old watchword.

“Five pounds.”

“Done.”

And getting Campbell to hold the beak, which the bird was using with all its vigour, he grasped its legs and wings together by his left hand, and began to tear from the tender living skin the feathers. Every handful showed the quivering flesh, and was followed by spouts of blood; nor did he seem to care—although the more carefully the flaying operation was performed, the better chance he had of carrying his wager—whether he brought away with the torn tips portions of the skin. The writhing of the tortured creature was rather an appeal to his deliberate cruelty, and the shrill scream only quickened the process. The back finished and bloody, the belly, snow-white and beautiful, was turned up, the feathers torn away, the breast laid bare, and one wing after the other stript of every pinion. Nothing in the shape of feathers, in short, was left, except the covering of the head, which resisted his fingers.

“There now is Plato’s definition of a man personified,” said he as he laughed.

During all this time a lady looked over the parapet. Dewhurst caught her eye red with anger, but he only laughed the louder.

“Now, Hamilton,” said he, “you take the bird, and we mount to the platform. When I give the sign, fling him in, and we shall see how the bet goes.”

They accordingly mounted, and the lady turning her back, as if she had been unable to bear longer the sight of so much cold cruelty, directed her vision towards the west; but a little boy, who was along with her, seemed to watch the operation.

“Now,” cried Dewhurst.

And Hamilton threw the bird into the sea. The

creature, still vivacious, true to its old instinct, spread out its bare wings in an attempt to fly, but it was in vain; down it came sinking below the surface, but rising quickly again to lash, with the bleeding wings, the water on which it used to swim so lightly and elegantly. The struggle between the effort to fly and the tendency to sink was continued for several minutes, its screams bringing closer around it many of its compeers, who looked as if with pity and amazement on the suffering victim, known to them now only by the well-known cry of distress.

Meanwhile these curious students of natural history stood looking over the rail, watch in hand; and the little boy, an important personage in our story, also intent upon the experiment, cried out two solitary words, very simple ones too, and yet fraught with a strange import, as regards consequences, that could not be gathered from them.

"See, ma'."

But the lady to whom they were addressed had still her head turned away.

"Six minutes," cried Dewhurst. "The time is up, and the bird is only this instant down. I win."

"I admit it," responded Hamilton, evidently disconcerted. "I shall pay you to-night at Stewart's, at seven o'clock. I got my remittance yesterday."

"Content," said Dewhurst. "That's the third bet I have gained off you within a fortnight."

Hamilton bit his lip and scowled—an act which only roused against him the raillery of his comrades, who were now collected in a circle, and symptoms of anger of a more expressive kind showed themselves.

"You have been at this trade of flaying before," said he, looking sternly at Dewhurst. "Your father, like the other West Indians, is well acquainted with the

flaying of negroes, and you have been following his example with the Jamaica lungies. But, by G—d," he added, getting enraged, "next time we cross the rapiers of a bet, it shall be for ten times five."

"This instant," answered Dewhurst, on whom the imputations about his father acted as a fiery stimulant.

"Seek your subject," responded Hamilton.

"You see that lady there?" continued the West Indian. "She has a boy with her."

"I do."

"The mother of the boy, or not?" continued Dewhurst. "I say she is; and, in place of fifty, I'll make it a hundred."

"Have you ever seen them before?" asked Hamilton, trying to be calm.

"Never. I know no more of them than you do; and, besides, I give you your choice of mother, or not mother."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Campbell, as he looked intently at Dewhurst. "Are you mad, Dewhurst? Has your last triumph blinded you? The woman is too old by ten years."

Hamilton turned round without saying a word, and drew cautiously near the lady, whose eyes, as she stood looking at a foreign ship coming in, were still scornful, and it seemed as if she waited until some gentleman came up to inform him of the cruel act she had so recently witnessed. Resisting her fiery glances, he surveyed her calmly, looking by turns at her and the boy. A slight smile played on his lip in the midst of the indications of his wrath. One might have read in that expression—

"Not a feature in these two faces in the least similar, and the age is beyond all mortal doubt. I have the gull-flayer on the hip at last."

And returning to the companions with the same simulated coolness—

"Done for a hundred," he said. "That lady is not the mother of that boy."

"Agreed," answered Dewhurst, with a look of inward triumph. "How to be decided?"

"By the lips of the lady herself."

"Agreed."

"Yes," joined Campbell, "if you can get these lips to move. She looks angry, and now she is moving along probably for home, bequeathing to us the last look of her scorn. We shall give her time to cool down, and Cameron and I will then pay our respects to her. We shall get it out of the boy if she refuse to answer."

It was as Campbell said. The lady with the boy, who held her by the hand, had begun her return along the jetty. The companions kept walking behind; and of these, Campbell and Dewhurst fell back a little from the other two.

"Hark, Campbell," said Dewhurst. "Back me against Cameron for any sum you can get out of him. I'm sure of my quarry; and," laughing within the teeth, he added, "I'll gull him again."

"You're ruined, man," whispered his companion. "The woman is evidently too old, and I am satisfied you will catch some of her wrinkles."

A deeper whisper from Dewhurst conveyed to the ear of his friend—

"I heard the boy call her mother."

"The devil!" exclaimed Campbell in surprise; but, catching himself, "it might have been grandmother he meant."

"No, no. Children in Scotland use grandma', never ma', to grandmother. I'm satisfied; and if you are not a fool, take advantage of my"—

"Dishonesty," added Campbell.

"No; all fair with that fellow Hamilton. Besides, all bets assume a retention of reasons, otherwise there could be no bets. In addition, I did not assert that I did not hear them address each other."

"That's something," said Campbell. "I do not say it is impossible, or even very improbable, that she may be the mother; and if you will assure me, on your honour, of what you heard, I will have a little speculative speculation on Cameron."

"I can swear; and if I couldn't, do you think I would have bet so high, as in the event of losing I should be ruined?"

"I'm content," said Campbell. "Ho, there, Cameron! I will back Dewhurst on the maternity for ten."

"That will just pay Nightingale," replied Cameron. "I accept. Now for the grand *denouement*. Let us accost the arbitress of our fortunes."

"Not yet," said Hamilton. "Wait till she gets to the lighthouse, where there are people. It is clear she has not a good opinion of us, and in this solitary place she might get alarmed."

Hanging back to wait their opportunity, now upon the verge of a decision which might be attended with disastrous results to some of them, the whole four appeared absorbed in anxiety. Not a word was spoken; and it seemed possible that, during these trying minutes, a hint would have broken up the imprudent and dangerous compact. The terror of the club was before them, and the false honour which ruled them, in place of obedience to their fathers, and humanity to dumb creatures, retained the ascendancy. So has it ever been with the worship of false gods: their exactions have always been in proportion to the folly and credulity of their votaries. The moment was approaching. The die was to carry formidable issues. Dark shadows

broke in through the resolution to be brave, as might have been observed in the features of both the principals. At length Campbell took the lead. They approached the lady, who at first seemed to shrink from them as monsters.

"We beg pardon," he said. "Be assured, madam, we have not the most distant intention to offend you. The truth is, that we have a bet among us as to whether you are the mother of this fine boy. We assure you, moreover, that it was the sport of betting that sought out the subject, and the nature of that subject cannot, we presume, be prejudicial either to your honour or your feelings. While I ask your pardon, allow me to add that the wager, foolish or not, is to be decided by your answer—yes or no."

"No."

After pronouncing, with a severe sternness, this monosyllable, she paused a little; and looking round upon the youths with a seriousness and dignity that sat upon her so well that they shrunk from her glance, she added, with a corresponding solemnity—

"Would to God, who sees all things—ay, and punishes all those who are cruel to the creatures He has formed with feelings suitable to their natures, and dear to them as ours are to us—that he who bet upon my being the mother of this boy may be he who tortured the unoffending bird!"

And, with these words, she departed, leaving the bewildered students looking at each other, with various emotions. It was, perhaps, fortunate for Dewhurst that the little sermon, contrary to the practice of the courts, came after, in place of preceding the condemnation, for he had been rendered all but insensible by the formidable monosyllable. He saw there was some mystery overhanging his present position. He doubted,

and he did not doubt the lady; but he heard the boy use the word, and he took up the impression that he was, by some mistake on his part, to be punished for the flaying of the bird. The lady's eye, red and angry, had been fixed upon him, and now, when she was gone, he still saw it. But there were more lurid lights, playing round certain stern facts connected with his fortunes. He must pay this £100 on the decision of her who had burned him with her scorn. There was no relief for him. The club at the College had no mercy, and he had enraged Hamilton, whose spirit was relentless. He had been under rebuke from his father, who had threatened to cut him off; and, worse still, the remnant of the last yearly remittance was £110 in the Royal Bank, while debts stood against him in the books of tailors, confectioners, tavern-keepers, shoemakers—some already in the form of decrees, and one at least in the advanced stage of a warrant. To sum up all, he was betrothed to Miss M——sh, the sister of a writer to the signet, who had already hinted doubts as the propriety of the marriage. He saw himself, in short, wrecked on the razor-backed shelving rocks of misery. In his extremity, he clutched at a floating weed: the woman, the lady, did not speak the truth. He had ears, and could hear, and he would trust to them. The boy could not be wrong.

“Campbell,” he cried, “dog her home—she lies!” Hamilton and Campbell burst out into a laugh, but Campbell had been taken aback by the lady's answer: he had not £10 to pay Cameron, and the fear of the club was before him, with its stern decree of the brand of caste and rejection by his associates. Since the moment of the lady's answer, he had been conscious of obscure doubts as to her truthfulness, clustering round the suspicion that she might have known, by hearing

something, that Dewhurst, the gull-flayer, was on the side of the maternity, and that she wanted to punish him—a notion which seemed to be favoured by the somewhat affected manner of her expressing her little sermon. These doubts, fluid and wavering, became, as it were, crystallized by Dewhurst's cry that she was a liar; and, the moment he felt the sharp angles of the idea, he set off after the lady.

This hope, which was nothing more than despair in hysterics, enabled Dewhurst to withstand, for a little, the looks of triumph in Hamilton and Cameron, in spite of their laugh, which still rung in his ears. The sermon had touched him but little, and if he could have got quit of this wildly contracted debt, he would likely be the same man again. He did not, as yet, feel even the dishonour of having taken advantage of the boy's statement—an act which he had subtlety enough to defend. Give him only relief from this debt, the fire of the club, the stabbing glances of Hamilton's eye. At least he was not bound to suffer the personal expression of his companions' triumph any longer than he could away.

"We will wait the issue of Campbell's inquiry," he said with affected calmness. "I have a call to make in the Links."

And he was retreating, even as he uttered these words.

"I owe you £5," cried Hamilton, "which, *as a man of honour*, I pay you to-night at seven o'clock, upon the instant, at Stewart's. I have no wish to be dragged before the club."

With this barb, touched with wararra poison, or ten times distilled kakodyle, and a layer of honey over all, Dewhurst hurried away, to make no call. He was hard to subdue, and a puppy, whose passion it was to

strut, in the perfection of a refined toilette, among fashionable street-walkers. While he was abroad, his cares rankling within were overborne by the consciousness of being "in position." The dog's nose is cold even when his tongue is reeking; and as he walked slowly along, his exterior showed the proper thermometric nonchalance—it was not the time for a pyrometric measurement within the heart. On his way, he talked to a Leith merchant, who hailed him; yet he exhibited the required *retenu*, so expressive of confidence and ease within, and withal so fashionable. You might have said that he had the heart to wing a partridge,—to "wing it," a pretty phrase in the mouth of a polite sportsman, who, if a poacher were to break the bones of his leg, would, in his own case, think it a little different. Yes, Dewhurst might have been supposed to be able to "wing a partridge,"—not to "flay a gull."

It was while thus "in position"—not its master, but its slave—that curvation of the spine of society, which produces so much paralysis and death—that, when he came to Princes Street, he felt himself constrained and able to walk up South St. Andrew Street, direct to the door of the Royal Bank. He even entered; he even drew a draft; he even made that draft £110, all the money he had there in keeping for so many coming wants and exigencies; he even presented it to the teller, who knew his circumstances and his dangers—ay, and his father's anxieties while he sent the yearly remittance.

"All, Mr. Dewhurst?" said the teller, looking blank at the draft.

"All, sir; I require it all," answered the student, with such a mouthful of the vowel, that we might write the word *requoire*, and not be far from the pronunciation.

The teller gave his head a significant shake. If he had had a tail to shake, and had shaken that tail, it would have been much the same.

Having got the money, he was more than ever under the law of that proclivity, on the broad line to ruin, on which so many young men take stations; and still retaining his, he went at the hour of the hot joints, to dine at the Rainbow, where he met many others, in that refreshment house, of the same class, who, like himself, considered—that is, while the money was there—that guineas in the purse supersede the necessity of having ideas in the head. He took to such liquid accompaniments of the dinner, as would confirm the resolution he had formed, of paying at once his debt of honour. And why not? Was not he of that world whose code of laws draws the legitimate line of distinction between debts contracted to industrious tradesmen for the necessities of life, and those which are the result of whim, pride, or vindictiveness? All recollections of the flaying of the bird, and of the lady's adjuration to heaven, had given way to the enthusiasm of the noble feeling to obey the dictates of that eternal and immutable code of honour. And by seven o'clock he was at Stewart's, where he found Hamilton and Cameron waiting for their respective "pounds of flesh."

"Here is the £5," cried Hamilton, as he entered; and, throwing the note upon the table, "it is for the gull trick."

"And here," responded the West Indian, "is your £100 for the woman trick."

And he cast from him the bundle of notes, with a grandeur of both honour and defiance. "But I have a reservation to make. Campbell has not reported to me the issue of his commission; and if it shall turn out that the woman retracts, I will reclaim the money."

"And get it too," said the other, laughing sneeringly, as he counted the notes. "But here comes Campbell."

"Campbell," cried Cameron, as his debtor entered, "I want my £10 to pay Nightingale."

"Ask Dewhurst," said Campbell. "I have been cheated by him. He told me a lie. The woman speaks true, and I shall be revenged."

"I have nothing to do with Dewhurst," answered Cameron. "You are my debtor; and if I don't get the money to-night—you know my lodgings—the club will decide upon it to-morrow."

And, throwing a withering look upon his old friend—a word now changed for, and lost in that expressive vocable, debtor—he hurried out, followed by Hamilton, who had both his money and his revenge, and wished to be beyond the reach of a recall.

Left to themselves, the two remaining friends of the hour before, but now no longer friends, looked sternly at each other. The one considered himself duped; the other was burning under the imputation of being a cheat and a liar.

"Oh I don't retract," said Campbell, with increased fierceness. "It was upon the faith of your word that I ventured the bet against my own convictions. I have traced the lady to Great King Street, where she resides, as the aunt of the boy; and I am satisfied that, in a case where the boy's mother is alive, and now in her own house, he, of the age he is, never could have used the word mother or mamma, or any word of that import, to his father's sister. All power and energies are comparative. This £10 cracks the spine of my fortune as effectually as ten times the amount. I have not the money, and know no more where to find it than I do to get hold of the philosopher's stone. I repeat I have been cheated, and I demand of you the money."

"Which you shall never get," replied Dewhurst. "I can swear that I heard the words. They thrill on my ears now; and the best proof of my conviction is, that I am myself ruined. Yes," and he began to roll his eyes about, as the terrors of his situation came rushing upon him, on the wake of the now departing effects of the Rainbow wine—"Yes, the swell, the fop, the leader of the college *ton*, whose coat came from the artistic study of Willis, whose necktie could raise a *furor*, whose glove, without a wrinkle, would condescend only to be touched by friendship on the tip of the finger, is now at the mercy of any one of twenty sleazy dogs, who can tell the sheriff I owe them money. Money! why, I have only fifteen pounds in the wide world, and I must pay that to my landlady."

As he uttered these last words, the door opened, and there stood before him a man with a blue coat, surmounted by a red collar. He held a paper in his hand; his demeanour was deferential and exuberantly polite.

"That sum you have mentioned, sir," he said, looking to the student, "with £10 added, will save you and me much trouble. The debt to Mr. Reid is £25; and here is a certain paper which gives me the power to do an unpolite thing. You comprehend? I am an advocate for painless operations."

"Will you accept the £15?" said Dewhurst, now scarcely able to articulate.

"Yes, if this gentleman here, who is, I presume, your friend, will kindly add the £10. The expenses may stand."

Campbell could only grin at this strange conversation.

"Unwilling?" continued the messenger. "Ah, I see. It is strange that when I devote myself to a gentleman, his friends fly away. This is my misfortune. Well, there is no help for it. We must take a walk to

the prison," addressing himself to his debtor. "You are a gentleman, and I shall be your servant in livery."

Dewhurst braced himself with a violent effort, like a spasm, and took his hat.

"Give me the £10," said Campbell. "It will make no difference now. There are no degrees in despair."

"I must take care of my master's money," said the officer, with an attempt at a smile; and without going the full length of imitating that most philanthropic of all executors of the law, Simpson, who patted his victims on the back while he adjusted the rope, he added, "And now, sir, I am at your humble service."

In a very short time after, the strange events of that day were terminated by the young man being placed in the debtor's prison of the Calton. Like other jail birds, he at first shunned his brethren in misfortune, fleeing to his room, and shrouding himself in solitude and partial darkness. The change from a life of gaiety, if not dissipation, to the experiences of prison squalor, had come upon him without preparation, if indeed preparation for evil ever diminishes or much ameliorates the inevitable effects of the visitation. Unfortunates exhibit wonderful diversities in their manifestations. Dewhurst became dejected, broken in spirits, sad, and remorseful. He scarcely stirred from the bed on which he had thrown himself when he entered; and his mind became a theatre where strange plays were acted, and strange personages performed strange parts, under the direction of stage managers over whom he had no control. Though some unhappy predecessor in the same cell had scribbled on the wall,

"A prison is a cannie place,
Though viewed with reprobation,
Where cheats and thieves, and scants o' grace,
Find time for cogitation,"

he did not find that he could properly cogitate or meditate, even if he had been, which he never was, a thinker. All his thoughts were reduced to a continued wild succession of burning images,—the mild face of his mother, so far away, as it smiled upon him when he ran about among the cane groves of the west; the negroes, with their “young massa” on their tongues, jabbering their affection; his father scowling upon him as undutiful; another, not so far away, in whose eyes—beautiful to him—love dwelt as his worshipper, looking all endearment, only the next moment to cast upon him the withering glance of her contempt, if not hatred; admirers, toadies, satellites, and sycophants, all there in groups and in succession, beslabbering him with praises, then exploding in peals of laughter. Nor was another awaiting in these saturnalia—the form and face of her whose one word of sentence had been to him as a doom, and who fixed that doom in his soul by her red glance of reproof. Seemingly very indifferent objects assumed in the new lights of his spirit gigantic and affraying features,—the sea-gull, with its torn back, bleeding and quivering, and those diamond eyes so bright even in its looks of agony—an object low indeed in the scale of nature, but here elevated by some overruling power into the very heart of man’s actions and destinies, as if to show out of what humble things the lightnings of retribution may come. Nay, these diamond eyes haunted him; they were everywhere in these saturnalian reveries, following every recurring image as an inevitable concomitant which he had no power to drive away, entering into the orbits of the personages, gleaming out of the heads of negroes, that of his father, that of his mother, even that of his mistress, imparting to the looks and glances of the latter a brilliancy which enhanced beauty, while it sharpened

them into poignancy. But most of all were they in some way associated with the form of the unknown lady. She never appeared to him as the being on whom his destiny was suspended; but, sooner or later, her own comparatively lustreless orbs changed into those diamonds, which could fulminate scorn not less than they could beam out supplication.

For several days and nights he had scarcely any intervals of peace from these soul-penetrating fancies, and these moments were due to visits. But who came to visit? Not the writer to the signet, the brother of his affianced, whom he had expected to see first of all as a friend, if not as a relation, ready to extend the hand that would save him; not any of those with whom he had shared the folly of extravagance, if not dissipation, on whom he had lavished favours in the wildness of his generosity. The first was felicitating himself on his sister's escape; the latter received the lesson that teaches prudence *a la distance*. His only visitors were one or two heads of families where he had been received as a fashionable friend, and these came only to look and inquire. Their curiosity was satisfied when they got out of him the amount of his debt, and pleased when they considered that their daughters were at home, and under no chance of becoming allied to a prisoner. One or two old associates, too, paid their respects to him, but they were of those who had resisted his fascinations, and found their pleasures in their studies. We seek for the virtues, but we do not always find them in the high places, where masks, copied from them and bearing their beautiful lineaments and their effulgence, are worn in their stead only to cover the vices which are their very antipodes. No: more often in lowlier regions, lying *perdu* behind vices, not voluntary, but often, as it were, inflicted and peering out, ashamed to

be seen, because arrayed in the rags of poverty. A solitary female stole in to him. Who was she? One with whom he had formed a connection of not an honourable kind, only now interrupted by the walls of the prison? No. One whom he had long before cast off, only because the vice he had inoculated her with had cast off the beauty that had inflamed him. Nor did he know the meaning of that stealthy visit, which lasted only for a few minutes—so unexpected, for he had not seen her during many months, so singular, so unnatural, so unlike the world, returning gratitude for injury, benediction for infamy, until, after she had suddenly slipped away, he found by the side of the wall a small bottle of wine. That form and face, once more beautiful in his estimation than were those even now of his honourable affianced, entered among the imagery of his reveries; but the diamond eyes never displaced those of her gentle nature. He had wronged her, but they never filled with the fire of denunciation. She had looked her grief at him only through the tears he had raised in them, and had never attempted to dry. Yes, the diamond eyes entered everywhere, and into every form but that one where the red heat of revenge might have been expected to shrivel up and harden the issues of tears.

Further on in the same evening, the jailer, a good-natured sort of fellow, came in to him while he was absorbed in these thoughts. He was at the time sitting on his bed.

“A lady called in the dusk,” he said, “and inquired if it was true you were here. I told her it was.”

“And what more?” asked the youth, as he started out of his day-dream. “But, stay—what like was she?”

“I could scarcely see her,” replied the man; “mid-

dling tall, rather young, as I thought—with a veil, through which I could see a pair of pretty, bright eyes."

"Were they like diamonds?" cried the student, absolutely forgetting that he was speaking to an ordinary mortal about very ordinary things.

"Ha, ha! I never saw diamond eyes," answered the jailer; "but I've seen glass ones in a doll's head looking very bright. Why, you 'aven't got mad, like some of the chicken-hearted birds in our cage?"

"Yes," cried the youth, "I'm frantic-mad; but stay, have patience. Did she want to see me?"

"Yes, she asked if she could; but when I told her she might, she seemed to get afeared to come into a jail, and said she would call again to-morrow night at the same hour."

"Can you tell me nothing more of what she was like?—not she who was here this evening?"

"Why, no; don't you think I know her kind? Oh, we see many o' them. They stick closest to the unfortunate, but 'tis because they are unfortunate themselves. Common thing, sir. Never feel for others till we have something to feel for ourselves. The visitor is a lady, sir."

"Can you tell me nothing more?" said the student eagerly. "How was she dressed?"

"A large, elegant cloak, sir; can scarcely say more."

"Was it trimmed with fur?"

"Not sure; but now, when I think, there was some lightish trimming—I mean lighter than the cloak."

"And the bonnet?"

"Why, I think velvet; but you'll maybe see her yourself to-morrow. The like o' her may do you good. The unfortunates who stick so close to the unfortunate do no good—they're a plaster that don't cure."

"It is Maria!" ejaculated Dewhurst, as the jailer shut the door. "She feels for me, and has come in

spite of her hard-hearted brother. Her diamond eyes are of another kind. They speak wealth, and love to bestow it. Her fortune is her own, and with that I may yet turn that wayward destiny, and laugh at my persecutors."

That ray of hope, illuminating his soul, changed almost in an instant the whole tenor of his mind. It might be compared to a stream of nervous energy, emanating from the brain, and shooting down through the network of chords, confirming convulsed muscles, and imparting to trembling members consistency of action and graces of motion. His reveries were scared by it, as owls under the influence of a sunbeam, and retreated into the dark recesses from which they had been charmed by the enchantment of despair. The personages of these visions were no longer avengers, casting upon him the burning beams of the diamond eyes. They were hopeful, pitiful; the flatterers and fawners were at their old work again, and Pleasure, with her siren face, smiled blandishments on him. Then he would justify the favours of the heaven he made for himself. He would be a logician, for once, in that kind of dialectics called the "wish-born."

"What was I afraid of?" he said to himself. "There is no turpitude, no shame in a fair bet. I was worsted in an honourable contest. What crazy power mocked me into the belief that all this that has befallen me was connected with the flaying of a bird? Don't we break the necks of innocent, yea, gentle fowls, not depredators like gulls, every day for our dinners? And don't ladies, as delicate as the unknown censor who dared to chastise me with her eyes, eat of the same, with a relish delightful to the tongues that pronounce the fine words of pity and philanthropy? But, even admitting there was cruelty in the act, where is the link that binds

it with the consequences which have brought me here? The bet upon the maternity was not an effect of the flaying of the bird. If it followed the prior bet, it would have followed another, in which I was gainer, equally the same. The mad energy which weaves in my head these day-dreams, and pursues me with these diamond eyes of wrath, is a lying power, and I shall master it by the strength of my reason, which at least is God's gift. Come, my Maria, as my good angel, and enable me to free my mind from illusions. I will sit and look into your eyes, as I have done so often. Yes, I will satisfy myself that they shine still with the lustre of love, hope, and happiness; and oh, let these, and these only, enter into my dreams."

And thus he satisfied himself, as all do, whose hope weaves the syllogisms of their wishes, and sits to see pleasure caught on the wing. The day passed apace to usher in the evening with its messenger of peace. Where, in that squalid place, would he seat her, whose peculiar province was the drawing-room? How would he receive her first look of sympathy? how repay it? with what words express his emotions? with what fervour kiss those lips redolent of forgiveness? with what ecstacy look into those eyes refulgent with love? He would control himself, and be calm. He would rehearse, that he might not fail in the forms of an interview on which hung his destiny, almost his life. The hour of seven arrived. He heard the heavy foot of the jailer come tramp, tramp along the lobby. There was a softer step behind, as if the echo of the heavier tread. A stern voice and a softer one mingled their notes. The door opened.

"My Mar——! O God! these scornful eyes again."

"Not scornful now," replied the soft voice of a woman, as she came forward, and stood before him in the dusk.

"Were there light enough," she continued, "I would lift my veil and show you that they are capable of a kindlier light than even that they now carry, for the offering I made to heaven has been more than answered."

"Ah, you come to retract," he said, "to speak the truth at last. It is not too late to say you *are* the mother—the mother of the boy. Nor need you be ashamed: there may be reasons; but many a woman lives to repent——"

"Hold, sir," she cried with indignation, as she fixed upon him a look even more penetrating than that he so well remembered. "I have nothing to retract—nothing to be ashamed of. I came here out of pure sympathy, to make amends to one who has fallen for a prayer which burst from me in my anger. Your friend, who called for me, told me that you were a prisoner, and that your imprisonment was the consequence of the wager which it fell to me to decide. I did not come to repeat to you what I said before, that I am not the mother of the boy, but to make an explanation."

"And I have one to ask," said he.

"I am ready to answer."

"How could I be deceived?" said he. "I heard the boy address you as his mother."

"And that is what I came to explain. I have taxed my memory since Mr. Campbell insisted, in my presence, that Frederick did address me in the manner you have stated. Shall I tell you the precise words he used?"

"I wait for them."

"Well, they were, 'See ma.'"

"The very words; and were they not enough for proof and belief?"

"Yes, sir ; but there are words which have two significations. Ma' is the contraction, as you know, for mamma, but it is pronounced the same as *maw*, which is a word which we use to designate those birds otherwise called gulls. I recollect that while I was unable to bear the sight of the tortured bird, and had turned my head in another direction, my nephew kept looking over the rails, and that, as he saw the struggling creature, he cried out to me the words you misconstrued. And thus the mystery is cleared up."

"Miserable and fatal error," he gasped out, as he staggered back. "And the connection!—the connection! There *was* retribution in those diamond eyes."

"What mean you, sir?"

"The bird's eyes that haunt me in my reveries, and enter into the sockets of my dream-beings!"

"Are you mad?"

"No; or the heavens are mad, with their swirling orbs and blazing comets, that rush sighing through space before some terrible power that will give them no respite, except with the condition that when they rest they die."

"Poor youth! so early doomed; I pity you."

"Ay, pity those who have no pity—those are the truly wretched; for pity, in the world's life, is the soul of reason's action. Ah, madam, it is those who have pity who do not need the pity of others, for they are generally free from the faults that produce the unhappiness that needs pity."

"But you have been punished, I admit, in a very strange and mysterious way; for the word used by the boy was the joining link of the two transactions, and you were led to misconstrue it—ay, and to take advantage of your misconception to get the better of your friend."

"I see it all."

"But I say you have been punished," continued she, consolingly; "and I perceive you are penitent—perhaps justice is satisfied; and when you are liberated, you may be the better for the lesson. I shall now reverse my prayer, and say to one I shall perhaps never see again, May God deal mercifully by you."

And with these words, she retreated. But her prayer was never answered, so far as man can judge of heaven's mysterious ways. The conviction settled down and down into his heart, that that apparently simple affair of killing a bird—which, even with the aggravation of all the cruelty exhibited by the thoughtless, yet certainly pitiless youth, is so apt to be viewed carelessly, or only with an avowal of disapprobation—which, if too much insisted on as an act to be taken up by superior retribution, is more apt still to be laughed at—was the cause of all the ills that had befallen him. The diamond eyes proved to him no fancy. But for all this, we are afforded, by what subsequently occurred, some means of explanation, which will be greedily laid hold of by minute philosophers. Even then it was to have been feared that the seeds of consumption had been deposited in favourable soil. In our difficulties about explanations of mental phenomena, we readily flee to diseases of the body, which, after all, only removes the mystery a step or two back in the dark.

It remains for me to add some words of personal experience. A considerable period after these occurrences, I had occasion—by a connection with a medium through which Dewhurst received from his father, whose fortunes had in the meantime failed, a petty allowance—to be the bearer to him, now liberated, of a quarter's payment. I forget the part of the town where I found him, but I have a distinct remembrance of the

room. It was a garret, almost entirely empty. He was lying on a kind of bed spread upon the floor. There was a small grate, with a handful of red cinders in it; only one chair, and a pot or pan or two. There was a woman moving between him and the fireplace, as if she had been preparing some warm drink or medicine of some kind for him. I did not know then, but I knew afterwards, that that woman was she who called upon him in prison, and deposited the small bottle of wine. Her love for him had always overcome any of those feelings of enmity, or something stronger, generally deemed so natural in one who has been robbed of her dearest treasure, and ruined. She alone had indeed not assumed the diamond eyes. The diamonds were elsewhere,—yea, in her heart, where she nourished pity for him who had so cruelly deserted her, and left her to a fate so common, and requiring only a hint to be understood by those who know the nature of women. After he had got out of prison, she sought him out, got the room for him, collected the paltry articles, procured food for him, and continued to nurse him till his death, with all the tenderness of a lover who had not only not been cast off, but cherished. He betrayed the ordinary symptoms of consumption, and the few words he muttered were those of thanks. I think he was buried in the Canongate Churchyard.

DAVID LORIMER.

“There is a history in all men’s lives.”—SHAKSPEARE.

It has been often said, and, I believe, with truth, that there are few persons, however humble in station, whose life, if it has been of any duration, does not present some incidents of an interesting, if not instructive, nature.

Induced by a belief in this assertion as a general truth, and yet further by an opinion that, in my own particular case, there are occurrences which will be considered somewhat extraordinary, I venture to lay the following sketch of my life before the reader, in the hope that it will not be found altogether devoid of interest.

With the earlier part of my history, which had nothing whatever remarkable in it, I need not detain the reader further than to say that my father was, though not a wealthy, a respectable farmer in Lanarkshire; that he lived at ——, within fourteen miles of Glasgow; that I was well educated; and that, at the period when I take up my own history, I was in the eighteenth year of my age.

Having given these two or three particulars, I proceed:

It was in the year 18—, and during the week of the Glasgow Fair, which occurs in July, that my father, who had a very favourable opinion of my intelligence and sagacity, resolved to entrust me with a certain important mission. This was to send me to the fair of Glasgow to purchase a good draught horse for him.

I am not sure, however, that, with all the good opinion my father entertained of my shrewdness, he would have deputed me on the present occasion had he been able to go himself; but he was not able, being confined to bed by a severe attack of rheumatism. Be this as it may, however, the important business was put into my hands; and great was the joy it occasioned me, for it secured me in an opportunity of seeing Glasgow Fair—a scene which I had long desired to witness, and which I had seen only once when but a very young boy.

From the moment I was informed by my father of his intention of sending me to the fair, and which was only on the day preceding that on which the horse-market is held, my imagination became so excited that I could attend to nothing. I indeed maintained some appearance of working—for though the son of a farmer, I wrought hard—but accomplished little of the reality.

The joys and the splendours of Glasgow Fair, of which I had a dim but captivating recollection, rose before my mind's eye in brilliant confusion, putting to rout all other thoughts, and utterly paralyzing all my physical energies. Nor was the succeeding night less blessed with happy imaginings. My dreams were filled with visions of shows, Punch's opera, rope-dancers, tumblers, etc. etc., and my ears rang with the music of fiddles, bugles, tambourines, and bass drums. It was a delicious night with me; but the morning which brought an approach to the reality was still more so.

Getting up betimes, I arrayed myself in my best attire; which attire, as I well recollect, consisted of a white corduroy jacket, knee-breeches of the same colour and material, and a bright-red waistcoat. A "neat Barcelona," tied carelessly round my neck, and

a pair of flaming-red garters, at least two inches broad, wound round my legs just below the knee, and ending in a knot with two dependent ends hanging down, that waved jauntily as I walked, completed my equipment.

Thus arrayed, and with thirty pounds in my pocket to purchase a horse for my father, I took the road, stick in hand, for Glasgow.

It was a fine summer morning. I was in high spirits; and, in my red waistcoat and red garters, looked, I believe, as tight and comely a lad as might be seen.

Pushing on with a light heart and light step, I quickly reached the suburbs of the city, and in a few minutes more was within view and earshot of the sights and sounds of the fair. I saw the crowd; I got a glimpse of the canvas roofs of the shows at the end of the old bridge—the locality on which the fair was then held; and heard the screaming and braying of the cracked trumpets, the clanging of the cymbals, and the thunders of the bass drums.

My heart beat high on hearing these joyous sounds. I quickened my pace, and in a few seconds was in the thick of the throng that crowded the space in front of the long line of shows extending from the bridge to the Bridgegate. As it was yet several hours to the height of the horse-market, I resolved on devoting that interval to seeing some of the interesting sights which stood in such tempting array before me.

The first that fixed my regard was “The Great Lancashire Giant,” whose portrait at full length—that is, at the length of some fifteen or twenty feet—flapped on a sheet of canvas nearly as large as the mainsail of a Leith smack.

This extraordinary personage was represented, in the picture, as a youth of sixteen, dressed in a ruffled

shirt, a red jacket, and white trousers; and his exhibitor assured the spectators that, though but a boy, he already measured nine feet in height and seven feet round the body; that each of his shoes would make a coffin for a child of five years old, and every stocking hold a sack of flour. Six full-grown persons, he added, could be easily buttoned within his waistcoat; and his tailor, he asserted, was obliged to mount a ladder when he measured him for a jacket.

Deeply interested by the astounding picture of this extraordinary youth, and the still more astounding description given of him by his exhibitor, I ascended the little ladder that conducted to the platform in front of the show, paid my twopence—the price of admission—and in the next minute was in the presence of “The Great Lancashire Giant;” a position which enabled me to make discoveries regarding that personage that were not a little mortifying.

In the first place, I found that, instead of being a youth of sixteen, he was a man of at least six-and-thirty; in the next, that if it had not been for the raised dais on which he stood, the enormous thickness of the soles of his shoes, and the other palpably fictitious contrivances and expedients by which his dimensions were enlarged, he would not greatly have exceeded the size of my own father. I found, in short, that the tremendous “Lancashire Giant” was merely a pretty tall man, and nothing more.

Quitting this exhibition, and not a little displeased at being so egregiously bitten, I passed on to the next, which was “Mr. Higgenbotham’s Royal Menagerie. The Noblest Collection of Wild Beasts ever seen in the Civilised World.”

This was a splendid affair. On a narrow stage in front were seated four fat red-faced musicians, in beef-

cater coats, puffing and blowing on bugles and trombones. Close by these, stood a thin, sharp-eyed, sallow-complexioned man in plain clothes, beating a huge drum, and adding the music of a set of Pandean pipes, which were stuck into his bosom, to the general harmony. This was Mr. Higgenbotham himself.

But it was the paintings on the immense field of canvas above that particularly attracted my attention. On this field were exhibited an appalling collection of the most terrific monsters: lions, as large as cows, gambolling amongst rocks; ourang-outangs, of eight feet in height, walking with sticks in their hands, as grave and stately as drum-majors; and a serpent, as thick as a hog's-head, and of interminable length—in truth, without any beginning, middle, or end—twining round an unfortunate black, and crushing him to death in its enormous folds.

All this was irresistible. So up the stair I sprang, paid my sixpence, and in a moment after found myself in the centre of the well-sawdusted area in the interior, gazing on the various birds and beasts in the cages around me. It was by no means a perplexing task; for, as in the case of "The Great Lancashire Giant," the fulfilment of the inside but little corresponded with the promise of the out. The principal part of the collection I found to consist of half-a-dozen starved monkeys, as many parrots—grey and green, an indescribable monster, in a dark corner, strongly suspected by some of the spectators of being a boy in a polar bear's skin, a bird of paradise, and a hedgehog, which they dignified with the name of a porcupine.

"Whaur's the lions, and the teegers, and the elephants, and the boy instructor, and the black man?" said a disappointed countryman, addressing a fellow in a short canvas frock or overall, who was crossing the area with a bucket of water.

"Ah! them's all in the other caravan," replied the man, "vich should 'ave been here on Monday night, but hasn't coom yet, and we suppose has broken down by the way; but there's a hanimal worth 'em all," he added, pointing to the indescribable monster in the dark corner. "The most curiousest ever was seen. Take a look on him; and if you don't own he is, I'll heat him, skin and all. They calls him the great Guampa from South America."

Having said this, the fellow, desirous, for reasons best known to himself, to avoid further questioning, hurried away, and disappeared at a side door.

It was just as this man left us, and as the small crowd of spectators, of whom I was one, who had surrounded him, were dispersing, that a gentleman—or a person, at least, who had the air and manner of one, although somewhat broken down in his apparel—came close up to me, and whispered in my ear, in a perfectly calm and composed tone—

"My lad, you are robbed."

With a start of horror, and a face as pale as death, I clapped my hand on the outside of my buttoned jacket, to feel for my pocket-book, which I carefully deposited in an inside pocket. It was gone.

"Be calm—be composed, my lad," said the gentleman, marking my excessive agitation, and seeing that I was about to make some outcry. "The fellows will bolt on the least alarm; and as there are three or four of them, may force their way out, if driven to extremity. Leave the matter to me, and I'll manage it for you."

During all this time, the stranger, who had spoken in a very low tone, carefully abstained from looking towards those of whom he was speaking, and wore such an air of composure and indifference, that no one could

possibly have suspected for a moment what was the subject of his communication to me.

Having made this communication, and desired me to remain where I was, and to exhibit no symptom of anything particular having happened, my friend, as I could not but reckon him, went out for an instant.

When he returned, he kept hovering about the entrance into the show, as if to prevent the egress of any one, but without making any sign to me, or even looking at me. My agitation during this interval was excessive; and although I strictly obeyed my friend's injunctions, notwithstanding that I knew not to what they were to lead, I could not suppress the dreadful feelings by which I was distracted. I, however, did all I could to refrain from exhibiting any outward sign of consciousness of my loss.

To return to my friend. He had not stood, I think, more than a minute at the entrance to the menagerie, when I observed three fellows, after having winked to each other, edging towards it. My friend, on seeing them approach, planted himself in the doorway, and, addressing the first, at the same time extending his arms to keep him back, said—

“Stop a moment, my lad, I have something to say to you.”

The fellow seemed taken aback for a moment by this salutation; but, quickly regaining his natural effrontery, he, with a tremendous oath, made an attempt to push past, when four policemen suddenly presented themselves at the entrance.

“Come away, my lads,” said my friend, addressing them. “Just in time; a minute later, and the birds would have been flown. Guard the door there a moment.” Then, turning to the astonished spectators who were assembled in the area—“Ladies and gentle-

men," he said, "there has been a robbery committed here within these fifteen minutes. I saw it done, and know the person who did it; but as he has several colleagues here, all of whom I may not have discovered, I have no doubt that the pocket-book—the article stolen—has been long since transferred to other hands than those that first took it. It is therefore necessary that we should all, without any exception, submit to a search of our persons by the officers here."

No objection to this proceeding having been offered by any of the persons present, the search began; my friend submitting himself the first.

The operation was a tedious one; for it was unsuccessful. One after another, including the three suspicious characters already alluded to, was searched, but no pocket-book was found. At length, the last person was taken in hand; and he, too, proved innocent—at least of the possession of my lost treasure.

I was in despair at this result, thinking that my friend must have been mistaken as to the robbery—that is, as to his having witnessed it—and that my money was irretrievably gone. No such despair of the issue, however, came over my friend—he did not appear in the least disconcerted; but, on the completion of the fruitless search, merely nodded his head, uttering an expressive humph.

"It's gone," said I to him in bitter anguish.

"Patience a bit, my lad," he replied, with a smile. "The pocket-book is within these four walls, and we'll find it too."

Turning now to one of the men belonging to the establishment, he desired him to bring one of the rakes with which they levelled the sawdust in the area.

It was brought; when he set the man to work with it—to rake up, slowly and deliberately, the surface of

the sawdust, himself vigilantly superintending the operation, and directing the man to proceed regularly, and to leave no spot untouched. I need not say with what intense interest I watched this proceeding. I felt as if life or death were in the issue; for the loss of such a sum as £30, although it could not, perhaps, be considered a very great one, was sufficiently large to distress my father seriously; and already some idea of never facing him again, should the money not be recovered, began to cross my mind.

All thoughts, however, of this or any other kind were absorbed, for the moment, by the deep interest which I took in the operations of the man with the rake; an interest this in which all present, less or more, participated.

For a long while this search also was fruitless. More than half the area had been gone over, and there was yet no appearance of my lost treasure.

At length, however—oh! how shall I describe the joy I felt?—a sweep of the rake threw the well-known pocket-book on the surface of the sawdust. I darted on it, clutched it, tore it open, and saw the bank-notes apparently untouched. I counted them. They were all there.

“I thought so; I thought we should find it,” said, with a calm smile, the gentleman who had been so instrumental in its recovery.

The whole proceedings of the thief or thieves, so promptly and correctly conjectured by my friend, were now obvious. Finding that passing it from hand to hand would not avail them, he who was last in possession of it had, on the search commencing, dropt it on the ground, and shuffled it under the sawdust with his foot.

The police now requested my friend to point out the

person who had committed the robbery, that they might apprehend him; but this he declined, saying that he was not quite sure of the man, and that he would not like to run the risk of blaming an innocent person; adding, with the quiet smile that seemed to be natural to him, that as the money was recovered, it might be as well to let the matter drop. The police for some time insisted on my friend pointing out the man; but as he continued firmly to decline interfering further in the matter, they gave it up and left the place.

Every one saw that it was benevolence, however improperly exerted, that induced my friend to refuse giving up the culprit; and as I had now recovered my money, I felt pretty much in the same disposition—that was, to allow him to fall into other hands.

I now presented the man who had been employed to rake the area with five shillings, for his trouble. But how or in what way was I to reward the friendly person to whom I was wholly indebted for the recovery of my pocket-book? This puzzled me sadly. Money, at least any such sum as I could spare, I could not offer one who, notwithstanding the little deficiencies in his apparel formerly noticed, had so much the appearance and manner of a gentleman. I was greatly at a loss. In the meantime, my friend and I left the exhibition together; he lecturing me the while, although in the most kindly manner, on the danger of going into crowded places with large sums of money about one's person.

He said he had seen a good deal of the world, had resided long in London, and knew all the tricks of the swell mob.

“It was my knowledge and experience of these gentry,” he added, “that enabled me to manage your

little matter so successfully." We were at this time passing along Stockwell Street, when, observing a respectable-looking tavern, it struck me that I might, without offence, ask my friend to take a little refreshment,—a glass of wine or so.

With some hesitation, I proposed it.

He smiled; and as if rather complying with my humour, or as if unwilling to offend me by a refusal, said, "Well, my young friend, I have no objection, although I am not greatly in the habit of going to taverns. Not there, however," he added, seeing me moving towards the house on which I had fixed my eye. "There is a house in the Saltmarket, which, on the rare occasions I do go to a tavern, and that is chiefly for a sight of the papers, I always frequent. They are decent, respectable people. So we'll go there, if you please; that is, if it be quite the same to you."

I said it was, and that I would cheerfully accompany him wherever he chose.

This point settled, we proceeded to the Saltmarket; when my friend, who, by the way, had now told me that his name was Lancaster, conducted me up a dark, dirty-looking close, and finally into a house of anything but respectable appearance. The furniture was scanty, and what was of it much dilapidated: half the backs of half the chairs were broken off, the tables were dirty and covered with stains and the circular marks of drinking measures. A tattered sofa stood at one end of the apartment, the walls were hung with paltry prints, and the small, old-fashioned, dirty windows hung with dirtier curtains.

To crown all, we met, as we entered, a huge, blowzy, tawdrily dressed woman, of most forbidding appearance, who, I was led to understand, was the mistress of the house. Between this person and Mr.

Lancaster I thought I perceived a rapid secret signal pass as we came in, but was not sure.

All this—namely, the appearance of the house and its mistress, the shabbiness of the entrance to the former, the secret signal, etc. etc.—surprised me a little ; but I suspected nothing wrong—never dreamt of it.

On our taking our seats in the apartment into which we had been shown, I asked my good genius, Mr. Lancaster, what he would choose to drink.

He at once replied that he drank nothing but wine ; spirits and malt liquors, he said, always did him great injury.

But too happy to be able to contribute in any way to the gratification of one who had rendered me so essential a service, I immediately ordered a bottle of the best port, he having expressed a preference for that description of wine.

It was brought ; when Mr. Lancaster, kindly assuming the character of host, quickly filled our glasses, when we pledged each other and drank.

Wine, at that time, was no favourite liquor of mine, so that I soon began to show some reluctance to swallowing it.

Mr. Lancaster, perceiving this, began to banter me on my abstemiousness, and to urge me to do more justice to the wine, which he said was excellent.

Prevailed on partly by his urgency, and partly by a fear of displeasing him by further resistance, I now took out my glass as often as he filled it.

The consequence was, that I soon felt greatly excited ; and eventually so much so, that I not only readily swallowed bumper after bumper, but, when our bottle was done, insisted on another being brought in ; forgetting everything but my debt of gratitude to

Mr. Lancaster, and losing sight, for the moment at any rate, of all my obligations, in the delight with which I listened to his entertaining conversation. For another half hour we went on merrily, and the second bottle of wine was nearly finished, when I suddenly felt a strange sinking sensation come over me. The countenance of Mr. Lancaster, who sat opposite me, seemed to disappear, as did also all the objects with which I was surrounded.

From that moment I became unconscious of all that passed. I sank down on the floor in the heavy sleep, or rather in the utter insensibility, of excessive intoxication.

On awaking, which was not until a late hour of the night, I found the scene changed. The room was dark, the bottles and glasses removed, and my friend Mr. Lancaster gone.

It was some seconds before I felt myself struck by this contrast; that is, before I fully recollected the circumstances which had preceded my unconsciousness. These, however, gradually unfolded themselves, until the whole stood distinctly before me. After having sat up for a second or two—for I found myself still on the floor when I awoke, having been left to lie where I fell—and having recalled all the circumstances of the day's occurrences, I instinctively clapped my hand to the breast of my jacket to feel for my pocket-book. It was again gone. Thinking at first that it might have dropt out while I slept, I began groping about the floor; but there was no pocket-book there. In great alarm I now started to my feet, and began calling on the house. My calls were answered by the landlady herself, who, with a candle in her hand, and a fierce expression of face, flushed apparently with drink, entered the apartment, and sternly demanded what I

wanted, and what I meant by making such a noise in her house.

Taking no notice of the uncourteous manner in which she had addressed me, I civilly asked her what had become of Mr. Lancaster.

"Who's Mr. Lancaster?" she said fiercely. "I know no Mr. Lancaster."

"The gentleman," I replied, "who came in here with me, and who drank wine with me."

"I know nothing about him," said the virago; "I never saw him before."

"That's strange," said I; "he told me that he was in the habit of frequenting this house."

"If he did so, he told you a lie," replied the lady; "and I tell you again, that I know nothing about him, and that I never saw him before, nor ever expect to see him again."

I now informed her that I missed a pocket-book containing a considerable sum of money, and, simply enough, asked her if she had it, or knew anything about it.

At this, her rage, which before she seemed to have great difficulty in controlling, burst out in the wildest fury.

"I know nothing about your pocket-book," she exclaimed, stamping passionately on the floor; "nor do I believe you had one. It's all a fetch to bilk me out of my reckoning; but I'll take care of you, you swindler! I'm not to be done that way. Come, down with the price of the two bottles of wine you and your pal drank—fifteen shillings—or I'll have the worth of them out of your skin." And she flourished the candlestick in such a way as led me to expect every instant that it would descend on my skull.

Terrified by the ferocious manner and threatening attitude of the termagant, and beginning to feel that

the getting safe out of the house ought to be considered as a most desirable object, I told her, in the most conciliatory manner I could assume, that I had not a farthing beyond two or three shillings, which she was welcome to ; all my money having been in the pocket-book which I had lost—I dared not say of which I had been robbed.

“Let’s see what you have, then,” she said, extending her hand to receive the loose silver I had spoken of. I gave it to her.

“Now,” she said, “troop, troop with you ; walk off, walk off,” motioning me towards the outer door, “and be thankful you have got off so cheaply, after swindling me out of my reckoning, and trying to injure the character of my house.”

But too happy at the escape permitted me, I hurried out of the house, next down the stair—a pretty long one—at a couple of steps, and rushed into the street.

I will not here detain the reader with any attempt at describing my feelings on this occasion : he will readily conceive them, on taking into account all the circumstances connected with my unhappy position. My money gone now, there was no doubt, irretrievably ; the market over, no horse bought, the hour late, and I an entire stranger in the city, without a penny in my pocket ; my senses confused, and a mortal sickness oppressing me, from the quantity of wine I had drunk, and which, I began to suspect, had been drugged.

Little as I was then conversant with the ways of the town, I knew there was but one quarter where I could apply or hope for any assistance in the recovery of my property. This was the police office.

Thither I accordingly ran, inquiring my way as I went—for I knew not where it was—with wild distraction in my every look and movement.

On reaching the office, I rushed breathlessly into it, and began telling my story as promptly and connectedly as my exhaustion and agitation would permit. My tale was patiently listened to by the two or three men whom I found on duty in the office. When I had done, they smiled and shook their heads; expressions which I considered as no good augury of the recovery of my pocket-book.

One of the men—a sergeant apparently—now put some minute queries to me regarding the personal appearance of my friend Mr. Lancaster. I gave him the best description of that gentleman I could; but neither the sergeant nor any of the others seemed to recognise him. They had no doubt, however, they said, that he was a professed swindler, and in all probability one of late importation into the city; that there was little question that he was the person who had robbed me; adding, what was indeed obvious enough, that he had assisted in the recovery of my pocket-book from the first set of thieves who assailed me, that he might secure it for himself.

The house in the Saltmarket, which I also described as well as I could, they knew at once, saying it was one of the most infamous dens in the city. The men now promised that they would use every exertion in their power to recover my money, but gave me to understand that there was little or no hope of success. The event justified their anticipations. They could discover no trace of Lancaster; and as to the house in the Saltmarket, there was not the slightest evidence of any connection whatever between its mistress, or any other of its inmates, and either the robber or the robbery. The police indeed searched the house; but of course to no purpose.

Being, as I have already said, penniless, and thus

without the means of going anywhere else, I remained in the police office all night; and, in the hope every hour of hearing something of my pocket-book, hung about it all next day till towards the evening, when the sergeant, of whom I have before spoken, came up to me as I was sauntering about the gate, and told me that it was useless my hanging on any longer about the office; that all would be done in my case that could be done; but that, in the meantime, I had better go home, leaving my address; and that if anything occurred, I would instantly be informed of it. "But I think it but right to tell you, young man," he added, "that there is scarcely any chance whatever of your ever recovering a sixpence of your money. I mention this to prevent you indulging in any false hopes. It is best you should know the worst at once."

Satisfied that the man spoke truly, and that it was indeed useless my hanging on any longer, I gave him my name and address, and went away, although it was with a heavy heart, and without knowing whither I should go; for to my father's house I could not think of returning, after what had happened. I would not have faced him for the world. In this matter, indeed, I did my father a great injustice; for although a little severe in temper, he was a just and reasonable man, and would most certainly have made all allowances for what had occurred to me.

The determination—for it now amounted to that—to which I had come, not to return home, was one, therefore, not warranted by any good reason; it was wholly the result of one of those mad impulses which so frequently lead youthful inexperience into error.

On leaving the vicinity of the police office, I sauntered towards the High Street without knowing or caring whither I went. Having reached the street just

named, I proceeded downwards, still heedless of my way, until I found myself in the Saltmarket, the scene of my late disaster.

Curiosity, or perhaps some vague, absurd idea of seeing something or other, I could not tell what, that might lead to the recovery of my pocket-book, induced me to look about me to see if I could discover the tavern in which I had been robbed. I was thus employed—that is, gaping and staring at the windows of the lower flats of the houses on either side of the street, for I did not recollect on which was the house I wanted—when a smart little man, dressed in a blue surtout, with a black stock about his neck, and carrying a cane in his hand, made up to me with a—

“Looking for any particular place, my lad?”

Taken unawares, and not choosing to enter into any explanations with a stranger, I simply answered, “No, no.”

“Because if you were,” continued my new acquaintance, “I should have been glad to have helped you. But I say, my lad—excuse me,” he went on, now looking earnestly in my face, and perceiving by my eyes that I had been weeping, which was indeed the case—“you seem to be distressed. What has happened you? I don’t ask from any impertinent curiosity, but from sympathy, seeing you are a stranger.”

Words of kindness in the hour of distress, by whomsoever offered, at once find their way to the heart, and open up the sluices of its pent-up feelings. The friendly address of the stranger had this effect on me in the present instance. I told him at once what had occurred to me.

“Bad business, my lad; bad business indeed,” he said. “But don’t be cast down. Fair weather comes after foul. You’ll soon make all up again.”

This was commonplace enough comfort ; but without minding the words, the intention was good, and with that I was gratified.

My new friend, who had learnt from what I told him that I was penniless, now proposed that I should take share of a bottle of ale with him. Certain recollections of another friend, namely, Mr. Lancaster, made me hesitate, indeed positively decline, this invitation at first ; but on my new acquaintance pressing his kindness, and the melancholy truth occurring to me that I had now no pocket-book to lose, I yielded, and accompanied him to a tavern at the foot of the High Street. I may add that I was the more easily induced to this, that I was in a dreadful state of exhaustion, having tasted nothing in the shape of either food or drink for nearly thirty hours.

Having entered the tavern, a bottle of ale and a plate of biscuit quickly stood before us. My entertainer filled up the glasses ; when, having presented me with one, he raised his own to his lips, wished me "better luck," and tossed it off. I quickly followed his example, and never before or since drank anything with so keen a relish. After we had drunk a second glass each—

"Well, my lad," said my new acquaintance, "what do you propose doing? Do you intend returning to the plough-tail, eh? I should hardly think you'll venture home again after such a cursed mishap."

I at once acknowledged that I did not intend returning home again ; but as to what I should do, I did not know.

"Why, now," replied my entertainer, "I think a stout, good-looking, likely young fellow as you are need be at no loss. There's the army. Did you ever think of that, eh? The only thing for a lad of spirit. Smart clothes, good living, and free quarters, with a chance of

promotion. The chance, said I? Why, I might say the certainty. Bounty too, you young dog! A handful of golden guineas, and pretty girls to court in every town. List, man, list," he shouted, clapping me on the shoulder, "and your fortune's made!"

List! It had never occurred to me before. I had never thought, never dreamt of it. But now that the idea was presented to me, I by no means disliked it. It was not, however, the flummery of my new acquaintance, who, I need hardly say, was neither more nor less than a sergeant in coloured clothes, assumed, I suppose, for the purpose of taking young fellows like myself unawares,—I say it was not his balderdash, which, young and raw as I was, I fully perceived, that reconciled me to the notion of listing. It was because I saw in it a prompt and ready means of escaping the immediate destitution with which I was threatened, my foolish determination not to return home having rather gained strength than weakened, notwithstanding a painful sense of the misery which my protracted absence must have been occasioning at home. To the sergeant's proposal of listing, therefore, I at once assented; when the former calling in the landlord, tendered me in his presence the expressive shilling.

The corps into which I had listed was the ———, then lying in the Tower, London, there being only the sergeant and two or three men of the regiment in Glasgow recruiting. The matter of listing settled, the sergeant bespoke me a bed for the night in the tavern in which we were, that being his own quarters.

On the following day I was informed, much to my surprise, although by no means to my regret, that a detachment of recruits for the ——— were to be sent off that evening at nine o'clock by the track boat for Edinburgh, and from thence by sea to the headquarters of

the regiment at London, and that I was to be of the number. At nine o'clock of the evening, accordingly, we were shipped at Port-Dundas.

Before leaving Glasgow, however, I made one last call at the police office to inquire whether any discoveries had been made regarding my pocket-book, but found that nothing whatever had been heard of it.

On the following day we reached Edinburgh ; on the next we were embarked on board a Leith smack for London, where we arrived in safety on the fourth day thereafter, and were marched to the Tower, which was at the time the headquarters of the regiment. Amongst the young men who were of the party who came up with me from Scotland, there was one with whom I became particularly intimate, and who was subsequently my comrade. His name was John Lindsay, a native of Glasgow. He was about my own age, or perhaps a year older—a lively, active, warm-hearted lad, but of a restless, roving disposition.

It was, I think, about a fortnight after our arrival in London, that Lindsay one day, while rummaging a small trunk in the barrack-room, which had formed the entire of his travelling equipage from Scotland, stumbled on a letter, with whose delivery he had been entrusted by some one in Glasgow, but which he had entirely forgotten. It was addressed in a scrawling hand—"To Susan Blaikie, servant with Henry Wallscourt, Esq., 19, Grosvenor Square, London."

"Here's a job, Davy," said Lindsay, holding up the letter. "I promised faithfully to deliver this within an hour after my arrival in London, and here it is still. But better late than never. Will you go with me and see the fair maiden to whom this is addressed? It contains, I believe, a kind of introduction to her, and may perhaps lead to some sport."

I readily closed with Lindsay's proposal, and in ten minutes after we set out for Grosvenor Square, which we had no difficulty in finding. Neither were we long in discovering No. 19, the residence of Henry Wallcourt, Esq. It was a magnificent house, everything about it bespeaking a wealthy occupant.

Leaving me on the flagstones, Lindsay now descended into the area; but in two or three minutes returned, and motioned me with his finger to come to him.

I did so, when he told me that he had seen Susan Blaikie, and that she had invited us to come in. Into the house we accordingly went, and were conducted by Susan, a lively, pretty girl, who welcomed us with great cordiality, into what appeared to be a housekeeper's room.

My comrade, Lindsay, having given Susan all the Scotch, particularly Glasgow, news in his budget, the latter left the room for a few minutes, when she returned with a tray of cold provisions—ham, fowl, and roast beef.

Placing these before us, and adding a bottle of excellent porter, she invited us to fall-to. We did so, and executed summary justice on the good things placed before us.

After this we sat for about half an hour, when we rose to depart. This, however, she would not permit till we had promised that we would come, on the following night, and take tea with her and one or two of her fellow-servants. This promise we readily gave, and as willingly kept. One of the party, on the night of the tea-drinking, was the footman of the establishment, Richard Digby—a rakish, dissipated-looking fellow, with an affected air, and an excessively refined and genteel manner, that is, as he himself thought it. To others, at least to me, he appeared an egregious puppy ;

the obvious spuriousness of his assumed gentility inspiring a disgust which I found it difficult to suppress. Neither could I suppress it so effectually as to prevent the fellow discovering it. He did so; and the consequence was the rise of a hearty and mutual dislike, which, however, neither of us evinced by any overt act.

Having found the society of our fair countrywoman and her friends very agreeable, we—that is, Lindsay and myself—became frequent visitors; drinking tea with her and her fellow-servants at least two or three times a week. While this was going on, a detachment of the new recruits, of whom Lindsay was one, was suddenly ordered to Chatham. I missed my comrade much after his departure; but as I had by this time established an intimacy with Susan and her fellow-servants on my own account, I still continued visiting there, and drinking tea occasionally as formerly.

It was on one of these occasions, and about ten days after Lindsay had left London, that as I was leaving Mr. Wallscourt's house at a pretty late hour—I think about eleven at night—I was suddenly collared by two men, just as I had ascended the area stair, and was about to step out on the pavement.

“What's this for?” said I, turning first to the one and then to the other of my captors.

“We'll tell you that presently,” replied one of the men, who had by this time begun to grope about my person, as if searching for something. In a moment after—“Ah! let's see what's this,” he said, plunging his hand into one of my coat-pockets, and pulling out a silver table-spoon. “All right,” he added. “Come away, my lad;” and the two forthwith began dragging me along.

The whole affair was such a mystery to me, and of such sudden occurrence, that it was some seconds before

I could collect myself sufficiently to put any such calm and rational queries to my captors as might elicit an explanation of it. All that I could say was merely to repeat my inquiry as to the meaning of the treatment I was undergoing—resisting instinctively, the while, the efforts of the men to urge me forward. This last, however, was vain; for they were two powerful fellows, and seemed scarcely to feel the resistance I made. To my reiterated demand of explanation they merely replied that I should have it presently, but that they rather thought I did not stand greatly in need of it.

Obliged to rest satisfied, in the meantime, with such evasive answers, and finding resistance useless, indeed uncalled for, as I was unconscious of any crime, I now went peaceably along with the men. Whither they were conducting me the reader will readily guess; it was to Bow Street.

On being brought into the office, the men conducted me up to a person who, seated at a desk, was busily employed making entries in a large book. One of my captors having whispered something into this person's ear, he turned sharply round and demanded my name. I gave it him.

"The others?" he said.

"What others?" I replied. "I have only one name, and I have given it."

"Pho, pho!" exclaimed he. "Gentlemen of your profession have always a dozen. However, we'll take what you have given in the meantime." And he proceeded to make some entries in his book. They related to me, but I was not permitted to see what they were. The table-spoon which had been found in my pocket, and which had been placed on the desk before the official already spoken of, was now labelled and put past, and I was ordered to be removed.

During all this time I had been loudly protesting my innocence of any crime ; but no attention whatever was paid to me. So little effect, indeed, had my protestations, that one would have thought, judging by the unmoved countenances around me, that they did not hear me at all, for they went on speaking to each other, quite in the same way as if I had not been present. The only indication I could perceive of a consciousness of my being there, and of their hearing what I said, was an occasional faint smile of incredulity. At one time, provoked by my importunity and my obstinate iteration of my innocence, the official who was seated at the desk turned fiercely round, exclaiming—

“The spoon, the spoon, friend ; what do you say to that—found in your pocket, eh ?”

I solemnly protested that I knew not how it came there ; that I had never put it there, nor had the least idea of its being in my possession till it was produced by those that searched me.

“A very likely story,” said the official, turning quietly round to his book ; “but we’ll see all about that by-and-by. Remove him, men.”

And I was hurried away, and locked up in a cell for the night.

I cannot say that, when left to myself, I felt much uneasiness regarding the result of the extraordinary matter that had occurred. I felt perfectly satisfied that, however awkward and unpleasant my situation was in the meantime, the following day would clear all up, and set me at liberty with an unblemished character. From all that had taken place, I collected that I was apprehended on a charge of robbery ; that is, of abstracting property from Mr. Wallscourt’s house, of which the silver spoon found in my possession was considered a proof. There was much, however, in the

matter of painful and inexplicable mystery. How came the constables to be so opportunely in the way when I left the house? and, more extraordinary still, how came the silver spoon into my possession? Regarding neither of these circumstances could I form the slightest plausible conjecture; but had no doubt that, whether they should ever be explained or not, my entire innocence of all such guilt as the latter of them pointed at, would clearly appear. But, as the saying has it, "I reckoned without my host." On the following morning I was brought before the sitting magistrate, and, to my inexpressible surprise, on turning round a little, saw Richard Digby in the witness-box. Thinking at first that he was there to give some such evidence as would relieve me from the imputation under which I lay, I nodded to him; but he took no further notice of the recognition than by looking more stern than before.

Presently my case was entered on. Digby was called on to state what he had to say to the matter. Judge of my consternation, gentle reader, when I heard him commence the following statement:—

Having premised that he was servant with Mr. Wallscourt, of No. 19, Grosvenor Square, he proceeded to say that during the space of the three previous weeks he had from time to time missed several valuable pieces of plate belonging to his master; that this had happened repeatedly before he could form the slightest conjecture as to who the thief could possibly be. At last it occurred to him that the abstraction of the plate corresponded, in point of time, with the prisoner's (my) introduction to the house—in other words, that it was from that date the robberies commenced, nothing of the kind having ever happened before; that this circumstance led him to suspect me; that in consequence he had on the previous night placed a silver table-spoon

in such a situation in the servants' hall as should render it likely to be seen by the prisoner when he came to tea, Susan Blaikie having previously informed him that he was coming ; that, shortly after the prisoner's arrival, he contrived, by getting Susan and some of the other servants out of the room, on various pretexts, to have the prisoner left alone for several minutes ; that, on his return, finding the spoon gone, he had no longer any doubt of the prisoner's guilt ; that, on feeling satisfied of this, he immediately proceeded to the nearest station-house, and procuring two constables, or policemen, stationed them at the area gate, with instructions to seize the prisoner the moment he came out ; and that if the spoon was found on him—of which he had no doubt—to carry him away to Bow Street.

Such, then, was Mr. Digby's statement of the affair ; and a very plausible and connected one, it must be allowed, it was. It carried conviction to all present, and elicited from the presiding magistrate a high eulogium on that person's fidelity, ability, and promptitude.

The silver spoon, labelled as I had seen it, was now produced, when Mr. Wallscourt, who was also present, was called on to identify it. This he at once did, after glancing at the crest and initials which were engraven on the handle. The charge against me thus laid and substantiated, I was asked if I had anything to say in my own defence.

Defence ! what defence could I make against an accusation so strongly put, and so amply supported by circumstances ? None. I could meet it only by denial, and by assertions of innocence. This, however, I did, and with such energy and earnestness—for horror and despair inspired me with both courage and eloquence—that a favourable impression was perceptible in the court. The circumstantial statement of Digby, how-

ever, with all its strong probabilities, was not to be overturned by my bare assertions; and the result was, that I was remanded to prison to stand trial at the ensuing assizes, Mr. Wallscourt being bound over to prosecute.

Wretched, however, as my situation was, I had not been many hours in prison when I regained my composure; soothed by the reflection that, however disgraceful or unhappy my position might be, it was one in which I had not deserved being placed. I was further supported by the conviction, which even the result of my late examination before the magistrate had not in the least weakened, that my innocence would yet appear, and that in sufficient time to save me from further legal prosecution. Buoyed up by these reflections, I became, if not cheerful, at least comparatively easy in my mind. I thought several times during my imprisonment of writing to my father,—to whom, by the way, as I should have mentioned before, I wrote from Edinburgh, when on my way to London, in order to relieve the minds of my mother and himself from any apprehensions of anything more serious having happened me, telling them of my loss, and the way it had occurred, but without telling them that I had listed, or where I was going,—I say I thought several times during my confinement of writing to my father, and informing him of the unhappy circumstances in which I was placed; but, on reflection, it occurred to me that such a proceeding would only give him and the rest of the family needless pain, seeing that he could be of no service to me whatever. I therefore dropped the idea, thinking it better that they should know nothing about the matter—nothing, at least, until my trial was over, and my innocence established; concomitant events, as I had no doubt they would prove. In the meantime

the day of trial approached. It came, and I stood naked and defenceless; for I had no money to employ counsel, no friends to assist me with advice. I stood at the bar of the Old Bailey shielded only by my innocence; a poor protection against evidence so strong and circumstantial as that which pointed to my guilt.

My trial came on. It was of short duration. Its result, what every one who knew anything of the matter foresaw but myself. I was found guilty, and sentenced to fourteen years' transportation.

As on a former occasion, I will leave it to the reader himself to form a conception of what my feelings were when this dreadful sentence rung in my ears—so horrible, so unexpected. A sudden deafness struck me that, commingling all sounds, rendered them unintelligible; a film came over my eyes; my heart fluttered strangely, and my limbs trembled so that I thought I should have sunk on the floor; but, making a violent effort, I supported myself; and in a few seconds these agitating sensations so far subsided as to allow of my retiring from the bar with tolerable steadiness and composure.

It was several days, however, before I regained entire possession of myself, and before I could contemplate my position in all its bearings with anything like fortitude or resignation. On attaining this state, a thousand wild schemes for obtaining such a reconsideration of my case as might lead to the discovery of my innocence presented themselves to my mind. I thought of addressing a letter to the judge who had tried me; to the foreman of the jury who had found me guilty; to the prosecutor, Mr. Wallscourt; to the Secretary of State; to the King. A little subsequent reflection, however, showed me the utter hopelessness of any such proceeding, as I had still only my simple, unsupported asser-

tions to oppose to the strong array of positive and circumstantial evidence against me; that, therefore, no such applications as I contemplated could be listened to for a moment. Eventually satisfied of this, I came to the resolution of submitting quietly to my fate in the meantime, trusting that some circumstance or other would, sooner or later, occur that would lead to a discovery of the injustice that had been done me.

Writing to my father I considered now out of the question. The same reasons that induced me to abstain from writing him before my trial, presented themselves in additional force to prevent me writing him after. I resolved that he should never know of the misfortune, however undeserved, that had befallen me. I had all along—that is, since my confinement—looked for some letter or other communication from Lindsay. Sometimes I even hoped for a visit from him. But I was disappointed. I neither saw nor heard anything of him; and from this circumstance concluded that he, too, thought me guilty, and that this was the cause of his desertion of me. Friendless and despised, I at once abandoned myself to fate.

Of poor Susan Blaikie, however, I did hear something; and that was, that she was discharged from her situation. This intelligence distressed me much, although I had foreseen that it must necessarily happen.

In the apartment or cell into which I was placed after having received sentence, there were five or six young men in similar circumstances with myself—not as regarded innocence of crime, but punishment. They were all under sentence of banishment for various terms.

From these persons I kept as much aloof as possible. My soul sickened at the contamination to which I was exposed by the society of such ruffians, for they were

all of the very worst description of London characters, and I did all I could to maintain the distinction between myself and them, which my innocence of all crime gave me a right to observe.

Under this feeling, it was my habit to sit in a remote part of the cell, and to take no share whatever either in the conversation or in the coarse practical jokes with which they were in the habit of beguiling the tedium of their confinement.

There was one occasion, however, on which I felt myself suddenly caught by an interest in their proceedings.

Seeing them one day all huddled together, listening with great delight to one of their number who was reading a letter aloud, I gradually approached nearer, curious to know what could be in this letter to afford them so much amusement.

Conceive my astonishment and surprise when, after listening for a few minutes, I discovered that the subject which tickled my fellow-prisoners so highly was a description of my own robbery ; that is, of the robbery in Glasgow of which I had been the victim.

It was written with considerable humour, and contained such a minute and faithful account of the affair, that I had no doubt it had been written by Lancaster. Indeed it could have been written by no one else.

The letter in question, then, was evidently one from that person to a companion in crime who was amongst those with whom I was associated—no doubt he who was reading it. The writer, however, seemed also well known to all the other parties.

In the letter itself, as well as in the remarks of the audience on it, there was a great deal of slang, and a great many cant phrases which I could not make out. But, on the whole, I obtained a pretty correct knowledge of the import of both.

The writer's description of me and of my worldly wisdom was not very flattering. He spoke of me as a regular flat, and the fleecing me as one of the easiest and pleasantest operations he had ever performed. He concluded by saying that as he found there was nothing worth while to be done in Scotland, he intended returning to London in a few days.

"More fool he," said one of the party, on this passage being read. "That affair at Blackwall, in which Bob was concerned, has not yet blown over, and he'll be lagged, as sure as he lives, before he's a week in London."

"Well, so much the better," said another. "In that case we'll have him across the water with us, and be all the merrier for his company."

It was, I think, somewhat less than a month after this—for we were detained in prison altogether about two months after sentence till a sufficient number had accumulated for transportation—that we, meaning myself and those in the ward in which I was confined, were favoured with a new companion.

Throwing open the door of our ward one afternoon, the turnkey ushered in amongst us a person dressed out in the first style of fashion, and immediately again secured the door. At first I could not believe that so fine a gentleman could possibly be a convict; I thought rather that he must be a friend of some one of my fellow-prisoners. But I was quickly undeceived in this particular, and found that he was indeed one of *us*.

On the entrance of this convict dandy, the whole of my fellow-prisoners rushed towards him, and gave him a cordial greeting.

"Glad to see you, Nick," said the fellow who had foretold the speedy apprehension of the letter-writer, as already related. "Cursed fool to come to London so

soon. Knew you would be nabbed. What have you got?"

"Fourteen," replied the new-comer, with a shrug of his shoulders.

During all this time I had kept my eyes fixed on the stranger, whom I thought I should know. For a while, however, I was greatly puzzled to fix on any individual as identical with him; but at length it struck me that he bore a wonderful resemblance to my Glasgow friend Lancaster.

His appearance was now, indeed, greatly changed. He was, for one thing, splendidly attired, as I have already said, while at the time I had the pleasure of knowing him first he was very indifferently dressed. His face, too, had undergone some alterations. He had removed a bushy pair of whiskers which he sported in Glasgow, and had added to his adventitious characteristics a pair of green spectacles. It was these last that perplexed me most, in endeavouring to make out his identity. But he soon laid them aside, as being now of no further use—an operation which he accompanied by sundry jokes on their utility, and the service they had done him in the way of preventing inconvenient recognitions. Notwithstanding all these changes, however, in the new-comer's appearance, I soon became quite convinced that he was no other than Lancaster; and, under this impression, I took an opportunity of edging towards him, and putting the question plumply to him, although under breath, for I did not care that the rest should hear it.

"Your name, sir, is Lancaster, I think?" said I.

He stared in my face for a second or two without making any reply, or seeming to recognise me. At length—

"No, youngster, it isn't," he said with the most perfect assurance.

“ But you have taken that name on an occasion ? ” said I.

“ Oh, perhaps I may,” he replied coolly. “ I have taken a great many names in my day. I’ll give you a hundred of them at a penny a dozen. But, Lancaster, let me see,” and he kept looking hard at me as he spoke. “ Why, it can’t be,” he added, with a sudden start. “ Impossible ! eh ? ” and he looked still more earnestly at me. “ Are you from Glasgow, young un ? ”

I said I was.

“ Did you ever see me there ? ”

I shook my head, and said, to my cost I had.

How my friend Mr. Lancaster received this intimation of our former acquaintance I must reserve for another number, as I must also do the sequel of my adventures ; for I have yet brought the reader but half through the history of my chequered life.

THE CONVICT;

BEING THE SEQUEL TO "DAVID LORIMER."

THE reader will recollect that when he and I parted, at the conclusion of the last number, I had just intimated to Mr. Lancaster my conviction of our having had a previous acquaintance. Does the reader imagine that that gentleman was in any way discomposed at this recognition on my part, or at the way in which it was signified? that he felt ashamed or abashed? The sequel will show whether he did or not.

On my replying to his inquiry whether I had ever seen him in Glasgow, by shaking my head, and saying that I had to my cost, he burst into a loud laugh, and, striking his thigh with as much exultation as if he had just made one of the most amusing discoveries imaginable, exclaimed—

"All right. Here, my pals," turning to the other prisoners. "Here's a queer concern. Isn't this the very flat, Dick," addressing one of their number, "that I did so clean in Glasgow, and about whom I wrote you! The fellow whom I met in the show."

"No! Possible!" exclaimed several voices, whose owners now crowded about me with a delighted curiosity, and began bantering me in those slang terms in which they could best express their witticisms.

I made no reply to either their insolences or their jokes; but, maintaining an obstinate silence, took an early opportunity of withdrawing to a remote part of the apartment. Nor did I—seeing how idle it would

be to say a word more on the subject of the robbery which had been committed on me in Glasgow, as it would only subject me to ridicule and abuse—ever afterwards open my lips to Lancaster on the matter: neither did he to me, and there the affair ended; for, in a few days after, he was removed, for what reason I know not, to another cell, and I never saw him again.

Let me here retrograde for a moment. In alluding, in the preceding number, to the various wild ideas that occurred to me after my condemnation, on the subject of obtaining a reconsideration of my case, I forgot to mention that of applying to the colonel of my regiment; but, on reflection, this seemed as absurd as the others, seeing that I had been little more than three weeks in the corps, and could therefore lay claim to no character at the hands of any one belonging to it. I was still a stranger amongst them. Besides, I found, from no interference whatever having been made in my behalf, that I had been left entirely in the hands of the civil law. Inquiries had no doubt been made into my case by the commanding officer of my regiment, but with myself no direct communication had taken place. My connection with the corps, therefore, I took it for granted, was understood to be completely severed, and that I was left to undergo the punishment the sentence of the civil law had awarded.

To resume. In about a week after the occurrence of the incident with Lancaster above described, I was removed to the hulks, where I remained for somewhat more than a month, when I was put on board a convict ship, about to sail for New South Wales, along with a number of other convicts, male and female; none of them, I hope, so undeserving their fate as I was.

All this time I had submitted patiently to my des-

tiny, seeing it was now inevitable, and said nothing to any one of my innocence; for, in the first place, I found that every one of my companions in misfortune were, according to their own accounts, equally innocent, and, in the next, that nobody believed them.

It was in the evening we were embarked on board the convict ship; with the next tide we dropped down the river; and, ere the sun of the following day had many hours risen, found ourselves fairly at sea.

For upwards of three weeks we pursued our course prosperously, nothing in that time occurring of the smallest consequence; and as the wind had been all along favourable, our progress was so great, that many of us began thinking of the termination of our voyage. These, however, were rather premature reflections, as we had yet as many months to be at sea as we had been weeks. *

It was about the end of the period just alluded to, that as I was one night restlessly tossing on my hard straw mattress, unable to sleep, from having fallen into one of those painful and exciting trains of thought that so frequently visit and so greatly add to the miseries of the unfortunate, my ear suddenly caught the sounds of whispering. Diverted from my reflections by the circumstance, I drew towards the edge of my sleeping berth, and thrusting my head a little way out—the place being quite dark—endeavoured, by listening attentively, to make out who the speakers were, and what was the subject of their conversation. The former, after a little time, I discovered to be three of my fellow-convicts—one of them a desperate fellow, of the name of Norcot, a native of Middlesex, who had been transported for a highway robbery, and who had been eminently distinguished for superior dexterity and daring in his infamous profession. The latter,

however—namely, the subject of their conversation—I could not make out; not so much from a difficulty of overhearing what they said, as from the number of slang words they employed. Their language was to me all but wholly unintelligible; for although my undesired association with them had enabled me to pick up a few of their words, I could make nothing of their jargon when spoken colloquially.

Unable, therefore—although suspecting something wrong—to arrive at any conclusion regarding the purpose or object of this midnight conversation, I took no notice of it to any one, but determined on watching narrowly the future proceedings of Norcot and his council.

On the following night the whispering was again repeated. I again listened, but with nearly as little success as before. From what I did make out, however, I was led to imagine that some attempt on the ship was contemplated; and in this idea I was confirmed, when Norcot, on the following day, taking advantage of a time when none of the seamen or soldiers, who formed our guard, were near, slapped me on the shoulder with a—

“Well, my pal, how goes it?”

Surprised at this sudden familiarity on the part of a man from whom I had always most especially kept aloof, and who, I was aware, had marked my shyness, as he had never before sought to exchange words with me, it was some seconds before I could make him any answer. At length—

“If you mean as to my health,” said I, “I am very well.”

“Ay, ay; but I don’t mean that,” replied Norcot. “How do you like your quarters, my man? How do you like this sort of life, eh?”

“Considering all circumstances, it’s well enough ; as well as ought reasonably to be expected,” said I, in a tone meant to discourage further conversation on the subject. But he was not to be so put off.

“Ay, in the meantime,” said he ; “but wait you till we get to New South Wales ; you’ll see a difference then, my man, I’m thinking. You’ll be kept working, from sunrise till sunset, up to the middle in mud and water, with a chain about your neck. You’ll be locked up in a dungeon at night, fed upon mouldy biscuit, and, on the slightest fault, or without any fault at all, be flogged within an inch of your life with a cat-o’-nine-tails. How will ye like that, eh ?”

“*That* I certainly should not like,” I replied. “But I hope you’re exaggerating a little.” I knew he was.

“Not a bit of it,” said Norcot. “Come here, Knuckler ;” and he motioned to a fellow-convict to come towards him. “I’ve been telling this young cove here what he may expect when we reach our journey’s end, but he won’t believe me.” Having repeated the description of convict life which he had just given me—

“Now, Knuckler, isn’t that the truth ?” he said.

“True as gospel,” exclaimed Knuckler, with a hideous oath ; adding—“Ay, and in some places they are still worse used.”

“You hear that ?” said Norcot. “I wasn’t going to bamboozle you with any nonsense, my lad. We’re all in the same lag, you know, and must stick by one another.”

My soul revolted at this horrible association, but I took care to conceal my feelings.

Norcot went on :—“Now, seeing what we have to expect when we get to t’other side of the water, wouldn’t he be a fool who wouldn’t try to escape it if he could, eh ? Ay, although at the risk of his life ?”

At this moment we were interrupted by a summons to the deck, it being my turn, with that of several others, to enjoy the luxury of inhaling the fresh sea breeze above. Norcot had thus only time to add, as I left him—

“I’ll speak to you another time, my cove.”

Having now no doubt that some mischief was hatching amongst the convicts, and that the conversation that had just passed was intended at once to sound my disposition and to incline me towards their projects, I felt greatly at a loss what to do. That I should not join in their enterprise, of whatsoever nature it might be, I at once determined. But I felt that this was not enough, and that I was bound to give notice of what I had seen and heard to those in command of the vessel, and that without loss of time, as there was no saying how wild or atrocious might be the scheme of these desperadoes, or how soon they might put it in execution.

Becoming every moment more impressed with the conviction that this was my duty, I separated myself as far as I could from my companions, and, watching an opportunity, said, in a low tone, to the mate of the vessel, whom a chance movement brought close to where I stood—

“Mischief going on. Could I have a moment’s private speech of the captain?”

The man stared at me for an instant with a look of non-comprehension, as I thought; and, without saying a word, he then resumed the little piece of duty he had been engaged in when I interrupted him, and immediately after went away, still without speaking, and indeed without taking any further notice of me.

I now thought he had either not understood me, or was not disposed to pay any attention to what I said.

I was mistaken in my conjectures, and in one of them did injustice to his intelligence.

A moment after he left me I saw the captain come out of the cabin, and look hard at me for a second or two. I observed him then despatch the steward towards me. On that person's approach—

“I say, my lad,” he exclaimed, so as to be heard by the rest of the convicts on deck, “can you wipe glasses and clean knives, eh? or brush shoes, or anything of that kind?”

Not knowing his real purpose in thus addressing me, I said I had no experience in that sort of employment, but would do the best I could.

“Oh, if you be willing,” he said, “we’ll soon make you able. I want a hand just now; so come aft with me, and I’ll find you work, and show you how to do it too.”

I followed him to the cabin; but I had not been there a minute when the captain came down, and, taking me into a state room, said—

“Well, my lad, what’s all this? You wanted a private word of me, and hinted to the mate that you knew of some mischief going on amongst the convicts. What is it?”

I told him of the secret whisperings at night I had overheard, and of the discourse Norcot had held with me; mentioning, besides, several expressions which I thought pointed to a secret conspiracy of some kind or other.

The captain was of the same opinion, and after thanking me for my information, and telling me that he would take care that the part I had acted should operate to my advantage on our arrival in the colony, he desired me to take no notice of what had passed, but to mingle with my associates as formerly, and to leave the whole matter to him.

To cover appearances, I was subsequently detained in the steward's room for about a couple of hours, when I was sent back to my former quarters; not, however, without having been well entertained by the steward, by the captain's orders.

What intermediate steps the captain took I do not know, but on that night Norcot and other ten of the most desperate of the convicts were thrown into irons.

Subsequent inquiry discovered a deep-laid plot to surprise the guard, seize their arms, murder the captain and crew and all who resisted, and take possession of the ship.

Whether such a desperate attempt would have been successful or not, is doubtful; but there is no question that a frightful scene of bloodshed would have taken place; nor that, if the ruffians had managed well, and judiciously timed their attack, they had some chance, and probably not a small one, of prevailing.

As it was, however, the matter was knocked on the head; for not only were the leaders of the conspiracy heavily ironed, but they were placed in different parts of the ship, wholly apart, and thus could neither act nor hold the slightest communication with each other.

Although the part I had acted in this affair did not operate in my favour with the greater part of my fellow-convicts,—for, notwithstanding all our caution, a strong suspicion prevailed amongst them that I was the informer,—it secured me the marked favour of all others on board the ship, and procured me many little indulgences which would not otherwise have been permitted, and, generally, much milder treatment than was extended to the others; and I confess I was not without an idea that I deserved it.

On our arrival at Sydney, whither I now hurry the reader, nothing subsequent to the incident just recorded

having occurred in the interval with which I need detain him, I was immediately assigned, with several others, to a farmer, a recently arrived emigrant, who occupied a grant of land of about a thousand acres in the neighbourhood of the town of Maitland.

Before leaving the ship, the captain added to his other kindnesses an assurance that he would not fail to represent my case—meaning with reference to the service I had done him in giving information of the conspiracy amongst the convicts—to the governor, and that he had no doubt of its having a favourable effect on my future fortunes, provided I seconded it by my own good conduct.

The person to whom we had been assigned, an Englishman, being on the spot waiting us, we were forthwith clapped into a covered waggon, and driven off to our destination, our new master following us on horseback.

The work to which we were put on the farm was very laborious, consisting, for several weeks, in clearing the land of trees; felling, burning, and grubbing up the roots. But we were well fed, and, on the whole, kindly treated in other respects; so that, although our toil was severe, we had not much to complain of.

In this situation I remained for a year and a half, and had the gratification of enjoying, during the greater part of that time, the fullest confidence of my employer, whose good opinion I early won by my orderly conduct, and—an unusual thing amongst convicts—by my attention to his interests.

On leaving him, he gave me, unasked, a testimonial of character, written in the strongest terms.

I was now again returned on the hands of Government, to await the demand of some other settler for my services.

In the meantime I had heard nothing of the result of the captain's representation in my behalf to the governor, but had no doubt I would reap the benefit of it on the first occasion that I should have a favour to ask. The first thing in this way that I had to look for was what is called a ticket of leave; that is, a document conferring exemption for a certain period from Government labour, and allowing the party possessing it to employ himself in any lawful way he pleases, and for his own advantage, during the time specified by the ticket. My sentence, however, having been for fourteen years, I could not, in the ordinary case, look for this indulgence till the expiration of six years, such being the colonial regulations.

But imagining the good service I had done in the convict ship would count for something, and probably induce the governor to shorten my term of probation, I began now to think of applying for the indulgence. This idea I shortly after acted upon, and drew up a memorial to the personage just alluded to; saying nothing, however, of my innocence of the crime for which I had been transported, knowing that, as such an assertion would not be believed, it would do much more harm than good. In this memorial, however, I enclosed the letter of recommendation given me by my last master.

It was eight or ten days before I heard anything of my application. At the end of that time, however, I received a very gracious answer. It said that my "praiseworthy conduct" on board the ship in which I came to the colony had been duly reported by the captain, and that it would be remembered to my advantage; that, at the expiry of my second year in the colony, of which there were six months yet to run, a ticket of leave would be granted me—thus abridging

the period by four years; and that, if I continued to behave as well as I had done, I might expect the utmost indulgence that Government could extend to one in my situation.

With this communication, although it did not immediately grant the prayer of my petition, I was much gratified, and prepared to submit cheerfully to the six months' compulsory labour which were yet before me.

Shortly after this I was assigned to another settler, in the neighbourhood of Paramatta. This was a different sort of person from the last I had served, and, I am sorry to say, a countryman. His name I need not give; for although the doing so could no longer affect him, he being long dead, it might give pain to his relatives, several of whom are alive both here and in New South Wales. This man was a tyrant, if ever there was one, and possessed of all the passion and caprice of the worst description of those who delight in lording it over their fellow-creatures. There was not a week that he had not some of my unhappy fellow-servants before a magistrate, often for the most trivial faults—a word, a look—and had them flogged by sentence of the court, by the scourger of the district, till the blood streamed from their backs. Knowing how little consideration there is for the unhappy convict in all cases of difference with his taskmaster, and that however unjust or unreasonable the latter's complaints may be, they are always readily entertained by the subordinate authorities, and carefully recorded against the former to his prejudice, I took care to give him no offence. To say nothing of his positive orders, I obeyed his every slightest wish with a promptitude and alacrity that left him no shadow of ground to complain of me. It was a difficult task; but it being for my interest that no complaint of me, just or unjust, should be put on record

against me, I bore all with what I must call exemplary patience and fortitude.

I have already said that my new master was a man of the most tyrannical disposition—cruel, passionate, and vindictive. He was all this; and his miserable fate—a fate which overtook him while I was in his employment—was, in a great measure, the result of his ungovernable and merciless temper.

Some of the wretched natives of the country—perhaps the most miserable beings on the face of the earth, as they are certainly the lowest in the scale of intellect of all the savage tribes that wander on its surface—used to come occasionally about our farm, in quest of a morsel of food. Amongst these were frequently women with infants on their backs. If my master was out of the way when any of these poor creatures came about the house, his wife, who was a good sort of woman, used to relieve them; and so did we, also, when we had anything in our power. Their treatment, however, was very different when our master happened to be at home. The moment he saw any of these poor blacks approaching, he used to run into the house for his rifle, and on several occasions fired at and wounded the unoffending wretches. At other times he hounded his dogs after them, himself pursuing and hallooing with as much excitement as if he had been engaged in the chase of some wild beasts instead of human beings—beings as distinctly impressed as himself with the image of his God.

It is true that these poor creatures were mischievous sometimes, and that they would readily steal any article to which they took a fancy. But in beings so utterly ignorant, and so destitute of all moral perceptions, such offences could hardly be considered as criminal; not one, at any rate, deserving of wounds and death at the

caprice of a fellow-creature acting on his own impulses, unchecked by any legal or judicial control. Besides, it were easy to prevent the depredations of these poor creatures—easy to drive them off without having recourse to violence.

The humanity and forbearance, however, which such a mode of proceeding with the aborigines would require was not to be found in my master. Fierce repulsion and retaliation were the only means he would have recourse to in his mode of treating them; and the consequence was, his inspiring the natives with a hatred of him, and a desire of vengeance for his manifold cruelties towards them, which was sure, sooner or later, to end in his destruction. It did so. One deed of surpassing cruelty which he perpetrated accomplished his fate.

One day, seeing two or three natives, amongst whom was a woman with a young infant on her back, passing within a short distance of the house, not approaching it—for he was now so much dreaded by these poor creatures that few came to the door—my master, as usual, ran in for his rifle, and calling his dogs around him, gave chase to the party.

The men being unencumbered, fled on seeing him, and being remarkably swift of foot, were soon out of his reach. Not so the poor woman with the child on her back: she could not escape; and at her the savage ruffian fired, killing both her and the infant with the same murderous shot.

This double murder was of so unprovoked, so cold-blooded, and atrocious a nature, that it is probable, little as the life of a native was accounted in those days, that my master would have been called upon to answer for his crime before the tribunals of the colony; but retribution overtook him by another and a speedier course.

On the following day my master came out of the house, about ten o'clock in the forenoon, with an axe in one hand, and the fatal rifle, his constant companion, with which he had perpetrated the atrocious deed on the preceding day, in the other, and coming up to me, told me that he was going to a certain spot in an adjoining wood to cut some timber for paling, and that he desired I should come to him two hours after with one of the cars or sledges in use on the farm, to carry home the cut wood. Having said this, he went off, little dreaming of the fate that awaited him.

At the time appointed I went with a horse and sledge to the wood, but was much surprised to find that my master was not at the spot where he said he would be ;—a surprise which was not a little increased by perceiving, from two or three felled sticks that lay around, that he had been there, but had done little—so little, that he could not have been occupied, as I calculated, for more than a quarter of an hour. Thinking, however, that wherever he had gone he would speedily return, I sat down to await him ; but he came not. An entire hour elapsed, and still he did not make his appearance. Beginning now to suspect that some accident had happened him, I hurried home to inquire if they had seen or heard anything of him there. They had not. His family became much alarmed for his safety—a feeling in which my conscience forbids me to say that I participated.

Two of my fellow-servants now accompanied me back to the wood, which it was proposed we should search. This, so soon as we had reached the spot where my master had appointed to meet me, and where, as already mentioned, he had evidently been, we began to do, whooping and hallooing at the same

time to attract his attention should he be anywhere within hearing.

For a long while our searching and shouting were vain. At length one of my companions, who had entered a tangled patch of underwood which we had not before thought of looking, suddenly uttered a cry of horror. We ran up to him, and found him gazing on the dead body of our master, who lay on his face, transfixed by a native spear, which still stood upright in his back. It was one of those spears which the aborigines of New South Wales use, on occasion, as missiles, and which they throw with an astonishing force and precision.

Such, then, was the end of this cruel man; and that it exceeded his deserts can hardly be maintained.

Luckily for me, my period of service with my late master was at this time about out. A few days more, and I became entitled to my ticket of leave. For this indulgence I applied when the time came, and it was immediately granted me for one year. On obtaining my ticket I proceeded to Sydney, as the most likely place to fall in with some employment. On this subject, however, I felt much at a loss; for not having been bred to any mechanical trade, I could do nothing in that way. Farming was the only business of which I knew anything; and in this, my father having been an excellent farmer, I was pretty well skilled. My hope, therefore, was, that I would find some situation as a farm overseer, and thought Sydney, although a town, the likeliest place to fall in with or hear of an employer. On arriving in Sydney, I proceeded to the house of a countryman of the name of Lawson, who kept a tavern, and to whom I brought a letter of introduction from a relative of his own who had been banished for sedition, and who was one of my fellow-

labourers in the last place where I had served. On reading the letter, Lawson, who was a kind-hearted man, exclaimed—

“Puir Jamie, puir fallow; and hoo is he standin’t oot?”

I assured him that he was bearing his fate manfully, but that he had been in the service of a remorseless master.

“Ay, I ken him,” said Lawson. “A man that’s no gude to his ain canna be gude to ithers.”

“You must speak of him now, however, in the past tense,” said I. “Mr. —— is dead.”

“Dead!” exclaimed Lawson, with much surprise. “When did he die?”

I told him, and also of the manner of his death.

“Weel, that is shockin’,” he remarked; “but, upon my word, better couldna hae happened him, for he was a cruel-hearted man.” Then, reverting to his relative, “Puir Jamie,” he said; “but I think we’ll manage to get Jamie oot o’ his scrape by-and-by. I hae gude interest wi’ the governor, through a certain acquaintance, and houpe to be able to get him a free pardon in a whily. But he maun just submit a wee in the meantime.

“But anent yoursel, my man,” continued Lawson, “what can I do for ye? Jamie, here, speaks in the highest terms o’ ye, and begs me to do what I can for ye; and that I’ll willingly do on his account. What war’ ye bred to?”

I told him that I had been bred to the farming business, and that I should like to get employment as a farm overseer or upper servant, to engage for a year.

“Ay, just noo, just noo,” said honest Lawson. “Weel, I’ll tell you what it is, and it’s sae far lucky: there was a decent, respectable-looking man here the

day, a countryman o' our ain—and I believe he'll sleep here the nicht—wha was inquiren' if I kent o' ony decent, steady lad who had been brocht up in the farmin' line. I kenna hoo they ca' the man, but he has been in my house, noo, twa or three times. He's only twa or three months arrived in the colony, and is settled somewhere in the neighbourhood o' Liverpool—our Liverpool, ye ken, no the English Liverpool. He seems to be in respectable circumstances. Noo, if he comes to sleep here the nicht, as I hae nae doot he will, seein' there's nae coach for Liverpool till the morn's mornin'—I'll mention you till him, and maybe ye may mak a bargain."

I thanked Lawson for his kindness, and was about leaving the house, with a promise to call back in the evening, when he stopped me, and insisted on my taking some refreshment. This, which consisted of some cold roast fowl and a glass of brandy and water, I readily accepted. When I had partaken of his hospitality I left the house, repeating my promise to call again in the evening. The interval, knowing nobody in Sydney, I spent in sauntering about the town.

On the approach of evening, I again returned to Lawson's. He was standing in the doorway when I came forward.

"Come awa, lad," he said, with a glad face, on seeing me. "Your frien's here, and I hae been speakin' to him aboot ye, and he seems inclined to treat wi' you. But he's takin' a bit chack o' dinner 'enoo, sac we'll let him alane for twa or three minutes. Stap ye awa in there to the bar, in the meanwhile, and I'll let him ken in a wee that ye're here."

I did so. In about ten minutes after, Lawson came to me, and said the gentleman up stairs would be glad

to see me. I rose and followed him. We entered the room, the worthy landlord leading the way. The stranger, with his elbow resting on the table, was leaning his head thoughtfully on his hand when we entered. He gazed at me for an instant wildly; he sprang from his chair; he clasped me in his arms. I returned the embrace. Reader, it was my own father!

"Davie, my son," he exclaimed, so soon as his surprise and emotion would permit him to speak, "how, in the name of all that's wonderful, has this come about? Where are you from? how came you here? and where on earth have you been all this weary time, since you left us?"

It was several minutes before I could make any reply. At length—

"I have much to tell you, father," I said, glancing at the same time towards Lawson, who stood with open mouth and staring eyes, lost in wonder at the extraordinary scene, which he yet could not fully comprehend.

Understanding, however, the hint conveyed in that look, the worthy man instantly quitted the apartment, leaving us to ourselves. On his doing so, I sat down at table with my father, and related to him the whole history of my misfortunes, without reserve or extenuation.

The narrative grieved and distressed him beyond measure; for, until I told him, he had no idea I stood before him a convicted felon; his first impression naturally being that I had come to the colony of my own free will.

Unlike all others, however, he, my poor father, believed implicitly my assertions of entire innocence of the crime for which I had been transported. But he felt bitterly for the degrading situation in which I stood, and from which neither my own conscious inno-

cence nor his convictions, he was but too sensible, could rescue me in so far as regarded the opinion of the world.

Having told my father my story, he told me his. It was simply this—the story of hundreds, thousands. Tempted by the favourable accounts he had heard and read of Australia, he had come to the resolution of emigrating; had, with this view, sold off at home; and here he was. He added that he had obtained a grant of land, of about 500 acres, in the neighbourhood of Liverpool, on very favourable terms; that although he had not found everything quite so suitable or so well-ordered as he had expected, he had no doubt of being able to do very well when once he should have got matters put in proper train. He said he had already got a very good house erected on the farm, and that although their situation for the first two or three months was bad enough, they were now pretty comfortable; and he hoped that, with my assistance—seeing, as he interpolated with a faint smile, I had just cast up in the nick of time—they would soon make things still better.

“Your poor mother, Davie,” continued my father, recurring to a subject which we had already discussed—for my first inquiries had been after that dear parent, who, I was delighted to learn, was in perfect good health, although sunk in spirits in consequence of long mental suffering on my account,—“Your poor mother, Davie,” he said, “will go distracted with joy at the sight of you. Her thoughts by day, her dreams by night, have been of you, Davie. But,” he added, seeing the tears streaming down my cheeks, “I will not distress you by dwelling on the misery you have occasioned her. It’s all over now, I trust, and you will compensate for the past. Neither will I say a word as to the folly of

your conduct in flying your father's house as you did. You have paid dearly for that false step; and God forbid, my son, that I, your father, should add to the punishment. You are, I perceive, too sensible of the folly to render it necessary. So, of that no more."

Of that folly I was indeed sensible—bitterly sensible; and could not listen to the calm, rational, and kind language of my father, without looking back with amazement at the stupidity of my conduct. It now seemed to me to have been the result of utter insanity—madness. I could neither recall nor comprehend the motives and impulses under which I had acted; and could only see the act itself standing forth in naked, inexplicable absurdity. Recurring again to the circumstances which had led to my present unhappy position, and which were always floating uppermost in my father's mind—

"That scoundrel, Digby," he said, "must have been at the bottom of the mischief, Davie. It must have been he who put the spoon into your pocket. What a fiendish contrivance!"

"I have always thought so, father," I replied; "and on my trial ventured to hint it, as I also did to the turnkeys and jailers; but although none said so directly, I saw very clearly that all considered it as a ridiculous invention—a clumsy way of accounting for a very plain fact."

My father now proposed that I should start with him on the following morning, per coach, for Liverpool, from which his farm was distant an easy walk of some six or seven miles. On the following morning, accordingly, after having duly acknowledged our worthy host's kindness, we took our seats on the outside of the coach, and were soon whirling it away merrily toward our destination.

During our journey, it gave both my father and I much painful thought how we should break the matter of my unhappy position to my mother. It would be death to her to learn it. At first we thought of concealing the circumstances altogether; but the chances of her hearing it from others, or making the discovery herself when she was unprepared for it, through a hundred different means, finally determined us on communicating the unpleasant intelligence ourselves; that is, my father undertook the disagreeable task, meaning, however, to choose time and circumstance, and to allow a day or two to elapse before he alluded to it.

Having arrived at Liverpool, we started on foot for my father's farm. Should I attempt it, I would not find it easy to describe what were my feelings at this moment, arising from the prospect of so soon beholding that dear parent, whose image had ever been present to my mind, whose kind tones were ever sounding in my ears like some heart-stirring and well-remembered melody. They were overpowering. But when my father, after we had walked for about an hour, raised his stick, and, pointing to a neat farm-steading on the slope of a hill, and on the skirt of a dense mountain forest that rose high behind it, said, "There's the house, Davie," I thought I should have sunk on the ground. I had never felt so agitated, excepting in that unhappy hour when I stood at the bar of the Old Bailey, and heard sentence of transportation awarded against me. But I compare the feelings on these two occasions only as regards their intensity: in nature they were very different indeed. On the former, they were those of excruciating agony; on the latter, those of excessive joy. As we approached the house, I descried one at the door. It was a female figure. It

was my mother. I gasped for breath. I flew over the ground. I felt it not beneath my feet. I would not be restrained by my father, who kept calling to me. My mother fixed her gaze on me, wondering at my excited manner—wondering who I could be; all unconscious, as I could perceive by her vacant though earnest look, that I was her son—the darling of her heart. But a mother's eye is quick. Another moment, and a shriek of wild joy and surprise announced that I was recognised; in the next, we were in each other's arms, wrapt in a speechless agony of bliss!

My father, whom I had left a long way behind, came up to us while we were locked together in this silent embrace, and stood by us for a few seconds without speaking a word, then passed quietly into the house, leaving us to ourselves.

“My son, my son!” exclaimed my mother, so soon as the fulness of her feelings would allow of utterance, “you have been cruel, cruel to your mother. But I will not upbraid you. In seeing you again—in clasping you once more to my bosom—I am repaid a thousandfold for all you have made me suffer.”

With what further passed between us, I need not detain the reader.

The tender expressions of a mother and son meeting under such circumstances as we met, being the language of nature, the embodiment of feelings which all can conceive, there is no occasion for dilating on them in my particular case. I pass on to other things of more general, or at least more uncommon interest.

The first day of my arrival at my father's farm was passed entirely within doors in social communion, and in bringing up that arrear of interchange in thought and feeling which our separation for so long a period had created.

On the following day I commenced work with my father; and although I had done my duty faithfully by both the masters I had served since I came to New South Wales, I soon found the difference between compulsory and voluntary labour.

In the former case I certainly wrought diligently, but as certainly not cheerfully. There was an absence of spirit that quickly gave rise to listlessness and fatigue, and that left the physical energies weak and languid. In the latter case, it was far otherwise. Toil as I might, I felt no diminution of strength. I went from task to task, some of them far harder than any I had yet encountered, with unabated vigour, and accomplished with ease double the work I ever could get through with when in bondage.

The joint labours of my father and myself, assisted occasionally by hired service—for he could not endure the idea of having convicts about him—soon put a new and promising face on the farm.

We cleared, we drained, we enclosed, and we sowed and planted, until we left ourselves comparatively little to do—I mean in the way of hard labour—but to await the returns of our industry.

It was some time after we had got things into this state—that is, I think about three months after I had joined my father—that the latter received intelligence of a band of bushmen or bushrangers having been seen in the neighbourhood. He was assured that they were skulking in the adjoining forest, and that we might every night expect our house to be attacked, robbed, and ourselves, in all probability, murdered.

This information threw us into a most dreadful state of alarm; these bushrangers, as the reader probably knows, being runaway convicts, men of the most desperate characters, who take to the woods, and subsist

by plundering the settlers—a crime to which they do not hesitate to add murder—many instances of fearful atrocities of this kind having occurred.

For some time we were quite at a loss what to do ; for although we had firearms and ammunition in the house, there were only four men of us—my father, myself, and two servant lads—while the bushrangers, as we had been told, were at least ten or twelve in number. To have thought then of repelling them by force, was out of the question ; it could only have ended in the murder of us all.

Under these circumstances, my father determined on applying to the authorities for constabulary or military protection ; and with this view went to Liverpool, where the district magistrate resided.

On stating the case to the latter, he at once gave my father a note to the commanding officer of the garrison, enjoining him to send a small party of military along with him,—these to remain with us for our protection as long as circumstances should render it necessary, and, in the meanwhile, to employ themselves in scouring the adjoining woods, with a view to the apprehension of the bushrangers, and to fire on them without hesitation in all cases where they could not be captured.

The result was, that a party of twelve men, commanded by a sergeant, were immediately turned out, and marched off with my father.

I was sitting on an eminence close by the house, and which commanded a view of the road leading to and from Liverpool, looking out for my father's return, when the party came in sight.

As they neared, I recognised the men, from certain particulars in their uniform, a party of the —th, the regiment into which I had enlisted.

The circumstance excited some curious feelings, and awakened a train of not very pleasing reflections.

I had never dreamt of meeting any of the corps in so distant a part of the world ; yet there was nothing more likely or more natural, a large military force being always kept in New South Wales, and frequently changed.

I felt, however, no uneasiness on the subject, thinking that it was not at all probable, seeing the very short time I had been in the regiment, and the constant accession of new men it was receiving, I should be recognised by any of the party.

In the meantime, the party were rapidly approaching me, and were now so near, that I could perceive the sergeant to be a tall and handsome young man of about two or three and twenty. Little did I yet dream who this sergeant was. I descended to meet them. We came up to each other. The sergeant started on seeing me, and looked at me with a grave surprise and fixed gaze. I did precisely the same by him. We advanced towards each other with smiling faces and extended arms. "Lorimer!" exclaimed the sergeant. "Lindsay!" I replied. It was indeed Lindsay, my old comrade, promoted to a serjeantcy.

Our mutual astonishment and satisfaction at this extraordinary and unexpected meeting was, I need not say, very great, although I certainly thought I perceived a certain dryness and want of cordiality in Lindsay's manner towards me. But for this I made every allowance, believing it to proceed from a doubt of my innocence, if not a conviction of my guilt, in the matter for which I had been transported. He in short, it seemed to me, could not forget that, in speaking to me, although an old comrade, he was speaking to a convicted felon. However, notwithstanding this feel-

ing on his part, we talked freely of old stories; and as we were apart from the men, I did not hesitate, amongst other things, to allude to my misfortune, nor to charge the blame of it on Digby.

"Well," said the sergeant, in reply to my remarks on this subject, "since you have mentioned the matter yourself, Lorimer, I am glad to hear you say so—that is, to hear you say that you are innocent of that rascally business; for, putting your assertions, so solemnly made, to what my wife says—for she has some queer stories of that fellow Digby—I have no doubt now of your innocence."

"Your wife!" exclaimed I in some amazement. "In the first place, then, you are married; in the next, how on earth, if I may ask, should she know anything of Digby?"

"Why, man, Susan Blaikie is my wife," replied the sergeant, laughing; "and she's not, I take it, half a dozen miles from us at this moment. I left her safe and sound in my quarters in Liverpool not two hours ago; and right glad will she be to see you, when you can make it convenient to give us a call. But of that we will speak more hereafter."

Like two or three other things recorded in this little history, this information gave me much surprise, but, like few of them, much gratification also; as I had feared the worst for poor Susan, seeing that she had been discharged from her situation, as I had no doubt without a character, probably under a suspicion of being concerned with me in the alleged robbery.

By the time I had expressed the surprise and satisfaction which Sergeant Lindsay's communication had given me, we had reached the house, when all conversation between us of a private nature ceased for the time.

The first business now was to set some refreshment

before the men. This was quickly done; the sergeant, my father, and I taking care of ourselves in a similar way in another apartment. The next was to take the immediate matter in hand into consideration. Accordingly, we three formed ourselves into a council of war, and, after some deliberation, came to the following resolutions:—That we should, soldiers and all, keep closely within doors during the remainder of the afternoon; and that as it was more than probable the bushmen would make their attack that very night, and as it was likely they would know nothing of the military being in the house, seeing that they always kept at a distance during the day, or lay concealed in hidden places, we should take them by surprise; that, for this purpose, we should remain up all night, and place ourselves, with loaded arms, by the windows, and in such other situations as would enable us to see them approaching, without being seen by them.

Having determined on this plan of operations, we resumed our conversation on indifferent matters, and thus spent the time till it was pretty far on in the night, when Lindsay suggested that it was full time the men were distributed in the positions we intended them to occupy. Two were accordingly placed at each window of both the back and front of the house, the sergeant and I occupying one,—he with one of our muskets, and I with a rifle. It was a bright moonlight night; so that, as the vicinity of the house was completely cleared around, to the distance of at least 200 yards on every side, no one could approach it without being seen; although they could remain long enough invisible, and in safety, in the dense wood beyond, and by which the house was surrounded on all sides but one.

The sergeant and I had thus sat for, I think, about an hour and a half, looking intently towards the dark

forest beyond the cleared ground, when we thought we saw several small, dark objects flitting about the skirts of the wood ; but whether they were kangaroos or men, we could not tell.

Keeping our eyes fixed steadily on them, however, we by-and-by saw them unite, and could distinctly make out that they were approaching the house in a body. Soon they came sufficiently near to enable us to discern that it was a party of men, to the number of about eight or ten. There might be more, but certainly no fewer. We could now also see that they were armed—at least a part of them—with muskets.

Satisfied that they were the much dreaded bush-rangers, of whose vicinity we had been apprised, the sergeant hastily left the window at which he and I had been seated, and, stealing with soft and cautious steps through the house, visited each of his posts to see that the men were on the alert. To each he whispered instructions to put their pieces on cock, to go down on their knees at the window, and to rest the muzzles of their muskets on the sill, but not project them out more than two or three inches. He concluded by telling them not to fire a shot until they heard the report of his musket; that then they were to pepper away as hard as they could pelt, taking, however, a sure and steady aim at every shot.

In the meantime the bushmen, whose advance had been, and still was, very slow and cautious, as if they dreaded an ambuscade, had approached to within seventy yards of the house. Thinking them yet too distant to make sure of them, we allowed them to come nearer. They did so ; but they had now assumed a stealthy step, walking lightly, as if they feared that their footfalls should be heard. They were led on by one of their number ; at least there was one man con-

siderably in advance of his fellows. He was armed with a sword, as we saw it flashing in the moonlight.

The party, handling their guns in readiness to fire, on the slightest alarm, at any living object that might present itself, were now within thirty or forty yards of the house, and had halted to reconnoitre; when the sergeant, who had been on his knees for several minutes before, with his piece at his eye, said softly, "Now," and fired. Whether he had aimed at the foremost man of the gang, I do not know; but if so, he had missed him, for he still stood firm. At this person, however, I now levelled, fired, and down he came. In the next instant the shots were rapping thick and fast from the different windows of the house.

The bushrangers, taken by surprise, paused for an instant, returned two or three straggling shots, and then fled in the utmost consternation and disorder. We kept pelting after them for a few minutes, and then, quitting the house, gave them chase, with a whooping and hallooing that must have added in no small degree to their terror. In this chase we overtook two that had been severely wounded, and came upon a third near the skirt of the wood, who, after running so far, had dropped down dead. The others, who had fled, some of whom, we had no doubt, were also wounded, escaped by getting into the forest, where it was no use looking for them. The two wounded men we made prisoners, and carried back to the house. As we were returning, we came upon the man whom I had brought down. Being extended motionless on the ground at full length, we thought him dead, and were about to pass on, intending to leave him where he lay till the morning, when I thought I heard him breathing. I knelt down beside him, looked narrowly into his face, and found that he

was still living. On discovering this, we had the unfortunate man carried to the house ; and having placed him on a mattress, staunched the bleeding of his wound, which was on the right breast, and administered a little brandy and water, which almost immediately revived him. He opened his eyes, began to breathe more freely, and in a short time was so far recovered as to be able to speak, although with difficulty.

The excitement of the fray over, if the late affair could be so called, my heart bled within me for the unhappy wretch who had been reduced by my hand to the deplorable condition in which he now lay before me. My conscience rose up against me, and would not be laid by any suggestions of the necessity that prompted the deed. In my anxiety to make what reparation I could for what now seemed to me my cruelty, I sat by the miserable sufferer, ready and eager to supply any want he might express, and to administer what comfort I could do him in his dying moments ; for that he was dying, notwithstanding the temporary revival alluded to, was but too evident from his ghastly look and rapidly glazing eye.

It was while I thus sat by the unhappy man, and while silently contemplating his pallid countenance, by the faint light of a lamp that hung against the wall of the apartment, that I suddenly thought I perceived in that countenance some traces of features that I had seen before. Whose they were, or where I had seen them, I did not at first recollect. But the idea having once presented itself, I kept hunting it through all the recesses of my memory. At length Digby occurred to me. But no, Digby it could not be. Impossible.

I looked on the countenance of the sufferer again. It was slightly distorted with pain, and all trace of the resemblance I had fancied was gone. An interval of ease succeeded. The real or imagined resemblance

returned. Again I lost sight of it, and again I caught it; for it was only in some points of view I could detect it at all. At length, after marking for some time longer, with intense interest, the features of the sufferer, my conviction becoming every moment stronger and stronger, and my agitation in consequence extreme, I bent my head close to the dying man, and, taking his cold and clammy hand in mine, asked him, in a whisper, if his name was not Digby. His eyes were closed at the moment, but I saw he was not sleeping. On my putting the question, he opened them wide, and stared wildly upon me, but without saying a word. He seemed to be endeavouring to recognise me, but apparently in vain. I repeated the question. This time he answered. Still gazing earnestly at me, he said, and it was all he did say, "It is."

"Don't you know me?" I inquired.

He shook his head.

"My name is Lorimer," said I.

"Thank God," he exclaimed solemnly. "For one, at least, of my crimes it is permitted me to make some reparation. Haste, haste, get witnesses and hear my dying declaration. There's no time to lose, for I feel I am fast going!"

Without a moment's delay—for I felt the importance of obtaining the declaration, which I had no doubt would establish my innocence—I ran for my father and Sergeant Lindsay, and, to make assurance doubly sure, brought two of the privates also along with me. It was a striking scene of retributive justice.

On our entering the apartment where Digby lay, the wretched man raised himself upon his elbow. I ran and placed two pillows beneath him to support him. He thanked me. Then raising his hand impressively, and directing it towards me—

"That young man there," he said, "David Lorimer, is, as I declare on the word of a dying man, innocent of the crime for which he was banished to this country. I, and no other, am the guilty person. It was I who robbed my master, Mr. Wallscourt, of the silver plate for which this young man was blamed; and it was I who put the silver spoon in his pocket, in order to substantiate the charge I subsequently brought against him, and in which I was but too successful."

He then added, that in case his declaration should not be deemed sufficient to clear me of the guilt imputed to me, we should endeavour to find out a person of the name of Nareby—Thomas Nareby—who, he said, was in the colony under sentence of transportation for life for housebreaking; and that this person, who had been, at the time of the robbery for which I suffered, a receiver of stolen goods, and with whom he, Digby, had deposited Mr. Wallscourt's plate, would acknowledge—at least he hoped so—this transaction, and thus add to the weight of his dying testimony to my innocence.

Digby having concluded, I immediately committed what he had just said to writing, and having read it over to him, obtained his approval of it. He then, of his own accord, offered to subscribe the declaration, and with some difficulty accomplished the task. The signature was hardly legible, but it was quite sufficient when attested, as it was, by the signatures of all present excepting myself. Exhausted with the effort he had made, Digby now sank back on his pillow, and in less than three minutes after expired.

We now learned from the unhappy man's two wounded companions, who, the reader will recollect, were our prisoners, that, soon after my trial and condemnation, he, Digby, had left Mr. Wallscourt's service, not under any suspicion of the robbery of the plate, but

with no very good general character ; that he had then betaken himself entirely to live with the abandoned characters whose acquaintance he had formed, and to subsist by swindling and robbery ; that he had proceeded from crime to crime, until he at length fell into the hands of justice ; and his banishment to the colony, where he had arrived about six months before, was the result ; that he had not been more than a month in the country when he and several other convicts ran away from the master to whom they had been assigned, and took to the bush. Such was the brief but dismal history of this wretched man.

On the following day we buried his remains in a lonely spot in the forest, at the distance of about half a mile from the house, and thereafter proceeded with our prisoners to Liverpool. On arriving there, I accompanied my father to the magistrate on whom he had waited on a former occasion, and having stated to that gentleman the extraordinary circumstance which had taken place—meaning Digby's declaration—he advised an immediate application to the governor, setting forth the circumstances of the case. This I lost no time in doing, enclosing within my memorial Digby's attested declaration, and pointing out Nareby as a person likely to confirm its tenor. The singularity and apparent hardship of the case, combined with the favourable knowledge of me previously existing, attracted the attention of the governor in a special manner, and excited in him so lively an interest, that he instantly had Nareby subjected to a judicial examination, the result of which was a full admission on the part of that person of the transaction to which Digby alluded.

Satisfied now of my innocence, and of the injustice which had been unwittingly done me, the governor not only immediately transmitted me a full and free pardon,

but offered me, by way of compensation, a lucrative Government appointment. This appointment I accepted, and held for thirty years, I trust with credit to myself, and satisfaction to my superiors. At the end of this period, feeling my health giving way, my father and mother having both, in the meantime, died, and having in that time scraped together a competency, I returned to my native land, and have written these little memoirs in one of the pleasantest little retirements on the banks of the Tweed.

I have only now to add, that I had frequent opportunities of seeing both Lindsay and his wife after the establishment of my innocence, and that no persons could more sincerely rejoice in that event than they did. My poor mother, whom my father had made aware of my situation soon after my arrival, and who had borne the intelligence much better than we expected, it put nearly distracted with joy.

"My puir laddie," she exclaimed, "*I* aye kent to be innocent. But noo the world 'll ken it too, and I can die happy."

THE AMATEUR ROBBERY.

If there is anything more than another of which civilisation has reason to be proud, it is the amelioration that has been effected in punishment for crimes. Nor is it yet very long since we began to get quit of the shame of our folly and inhumanity, if we have not traces of these yet, coming out like sympathetic ink dried by the choler of self-perfection and a false philosophy, as in such writings as the latter-day pamphlets. How a man who loves his species, and has a heart, will hang his head abashed as he turns his vision back no further than the sixteenth century, and sees the writhing creatures—often aged unhappy women—under the pilniewinkies, caschielaws, turkases, thumbikens, and other instruments of torture, frantically bursting out with the demanded confession that was to fit them for the stake or the rope! And even after these things in the curiosity shop of Nemesis were got rid of, the abettors of the law rushed with full swing into the operation of hanging, scarcely allowing a crime to escape, from cold-blooded murder down to the act of the famished wretch who snatched a roll from a baker's basket. However insensible these strange law-givers may have been to so much cruelty, however blind to the perversity, prejudices, and weaknesses incident to human testimony, however ignorant of the total inefficacy of their remedy to deter from crime, one might have imagined that they could not but have known, if they ever looked inwardly into their own hearts, how obscure are human motives, and especially

those that instigate to breaches of the law; and yet their consistent rule was, to make the *corpus delicti* prove the intention. These considerations have been suggested to me by the recollection of a wild adventure of some young men in Edinburgh, the circumstances of which, not belonging to fiction, will show better than a learned dissertation how easy it was for these Dracos to catch the fact and miss the motive.

The skeleton names—now, alas! the only representatives of skeleton bodies—Andrew W—pe, Henry S—k, and Charles S—th, may recall to the memory of some people in Edinburgh still, three young men, who, with good education, fair talents, and graces from nature, might have played a respectable rôle in the drama of life, had it not been for a tendency to “fastness,” a disease which seems to increase with civilisation. In their instance the old adage of Aristotle, *simile gaudet simili*, was exemplified to the letter; and the union confirmed in each a mind which, originally impatient of authority, fretted itself against the frame of society, simply because that frame was the result of order. They were never happy except when they went up to the palisades, struck upon them with their lath-blades, and when some orderly indweller looked over atop, ran away laughing. No doubt they had strong passions to gratify too; but, as is usual with this peculiar race of beings, the gratification was the keener the more it owed to a rebellion against decorum. If they ever differed, it was only in their rivalry of success; or when they did not go a spree-hunting together, they recounted their exploits at their nightly meetings, and then the result was an increase of moral inflammation.

Sometimes, for a change, they would take strolls into the country, where they could extract as tribute the admiration or wrath of clodhoppers without being

troubled with any fears of the police ; not that on any of these occasions they perpetrated any great infringements on the law, for, like the rest of their kind, if they could make themselves objects of observation, they were regardless whether their bizarreries were paid with admiration or only anger or fear, though, if they could produce by any means a causeless panic, the very height of their ambition was attained. In regard to this last effect of their escapades, they were, in the instance I am about to record, more than satisfied. They had gone, on a fine, clear, winter day, along the coast of the Firth of Forth towards Cramond ; and, to diversify their amusements, they took with them a gun, which was carried by S—th, with the intention of having a shot at any wild bird or barn-door fowl that might come conveniently within his range. Of this kind of game they had fewer chances, and the stroll would doubtless have appeared a very monotonous affair to a person fond of rational conversation. Nor was there much even to themselves of diversification till they got into a small change-house at Davidson's Mains, where, with a rampant authority, they contrived to get served up to them a kind of dinner, intending to make up for the want of better edibles by potations of whisky toddy.

If facts, as Quintilian says, are the bones of conversation, opinions are certainly its sinews ; and we might add, that whisky toddy is its nervous fluid. These youths, though unwilling to acquire solid information, could wrangle even to quarrelling ; but such were their affinities, that they adhered again in a short time, and were as firm friends as ever. They had raised a subject—no other than the question whether highwaymen are necessarily or generally possessed of true courage. Very absurd, no doubt, but as good for a wrangle as

any other that can be divided into affirmative and negative by the refracting medium of feeling or prejudice. S—th declared them all to be cowards.

“What say you to Cartouche?” said S—k; “was he a coward?”

“Not sure but he was,” said S—th; “he kept a band of blackguards and received their pay, but he was seldom seen in the wild *mélee* himself. He was fond of the name of terror he bore; but then, as he listened to the wonderful things the Parisian *blanchisseuses* and *chiffonniers* and *gamins* said of him, he knew he was not recognisable, for the very reason that he kept out of sight.”

“Oh yes,” said W—pe, who joined S—k; “and so he was like Wallace, who kept out of the sight of the English, and yet delighted in Dundee to hear himself spoken of by the crowds who collected in these troublesome times to discuss public affairs. S—th, you know Wallace was a coward, don’t you?”

“A thorough poltroon,” cried S—th, laughing; “ay, and all the people in Scotland are wrong about him. Didn’t he run off, after stabbing the governor’s son? and he was always skulking about the Cartland Crag. Then, didn’t he flee at the battle of Falkirk; and was he not a robber when Scotland belonged to Longshanks? No doubt the fellow had a big body, strong bones, and good thews; but that he had the real pluck that nerved the little bodies of such men as Nelson, or Suwarrow, ay, or of Napoleon, I deny.” Then he began a ludicrous singing, see-saw recitation of the English doggerel—

“The noble wight,
The Wallace dight,
Who slew the knight
On Beltane night,

And ran for fright
Of English might,
And English fight,
And English right ;”

and so on in drunken ribaldry.

“All very well for you who are a Shamite, Shmite, Shmith, Smith,” said W—pe. “We happen to be Japhetites. Then what say you to Rob Roy ?”

“That, in the first place,” replied S—th, “he was a Shemite ; for Gathelus, the first Scottish monarch, was a grandson of Nimrod, and, what is worse, he married Scota, the daughter of an Egyptian queen, so there was a spice of Ham in Rob ; and as all the Hamites were robbers, Rob was a robber too ;—as to whose cowardice there is no doubt whatever ; for a man who steals another man’s cattle in the dark must be a coward. Did you ever hear one single example of Rob attacking when in good daylight, and fighting for them in the sun ?”

“Ingenious, S—th, at any rate,” roared S—k ; “but I don’t agree with you. A robber on the highway, must, in the general case, have courage. He braves public opinion, he laughs at the gallows, and he throws himself right against a man in bold competition, without knowing often whether he is a giant or a dwarf.”

“All the elements of a batter pudding,” cried S—th, “without the battering principle. Ay, you forget the head-battering bludgeon, the instantaneous pistol, or the cunning knife ; none of all which would a man with a spark of courage in him use against an unarmed, defenceless traveller. Another thing you forget, the robber acts upon surprises. He produces confusion by his very presentation, fear by his demand of life or money ; and when the poor devil’s head is

running round, he runs away with his watch or his purse, perhaps both. 'Tis all selfishness, pure unadulterated selfishness ; and will you tell me that a man without a particle of honesty or generosity can have courage ?”

“Not moral courage, perhaps ; but he may have physical.”

“All the same, no difference,” continued the doughty S—th. “Who ever heard of a bodily feeling except as something coming through the body ? There are only two physical feelings : pain in being wounded or starved, and pleasure in being relieved from pain, or fed when hungry or thirsty. I know none other ; all the others are moral feelings.”

“You may be bold through drink acting on the stomach and head.”

“Ay, but the boldness, though the effect of a physical cause, is itself a moral entity.”

“Whoever thought that S—th was such a meta-physician !” said W—pe, a little agoggled in his drunken eyes.

“But the same may be said of every feeling,” rejoined S—k, somewhat roused to ambition by W—pe’s remark.

“And so it may, my little Aristotle,” continued the clever asserter of his original proposition. “Why, man, look ye, what takes you into Miss F—’s shop in Princes Street for snuff, when you never produce a physical titillation in your nose by a single pinch ? Why, it’s something you call love, a terribly moral thing, though personified by a little fellow with pinions. Yes, wondrously moral ; and sometimes, as in your case, immoral. Well, what is it produced by ? The face of the said Miss F—— painted as a sun picture in the camera at the back of your eye, where there is a membrane without a particle of nitrate of silver in its com-

position, and which yet receives the image. Well, what is love but just the titillation produced by this image imprinted on your flesh, just as the pleasure of a pinch is the effect of a titillation of the nerves in the nose? Yet we don't say that snuff pleasure is a moral thing, but merely nasal or bodily. What makes the difference?"

"How S—th is coming it!" said W—pe, still more amazed. "Where the devil has he got all this?"

"Why, the difference lies here. You know, by manipulation and blowing it, that you have a nose; but you don't wipe the retina at the back of your eye when you are weeping for love—only the outside, where the puling tears are. In short, you know you have a nose, but you don't know you have a retina. D'ye catch me, my small Stagyrte, my petit Peripatetic, my comical Academician, eh? Take your toddy, and let's have a touch of moral drunkenness."

"You ray-ther have me on the hip, S—th."

"Ay, just so; and if I should kick you there, you would not say the pain was a moral thing. All through the same. It's just where and when we don't know the medium we say things are moral and spiritual, and poetical and rational, and all the rest of the humbug."

"But though you say all highwaymen are cowards, you won't try that trick with your foot," said S—k, boiling up a little under the fire of the toddy.

"Don't intend; though, if you were to produce moral courage in me by pinching my nose, I think I could, after making up my mind and putting you upon your guard with a stick in your hand if you chose. Eh! my Peripatetic." And S—th was clearly getting drunk too.

"D—n the fellow, his metaphysics are making him impudent," cried W—pe.

"Why, you don't see where they hit," said S—th drawlingly. "Somewhere about the pineal; and therefore we say impudence is moral, sometimes immoral, as just now when you damned me. No more of your old junk, I say, sitting here in my cathedra, which by the way is spring-bottomed, which may account for my moral elasticity that a highwayman is a coward."

"Well," cried S—k, starting up. "I'll deposit a pound with W—pe, on a bet that you'll not take sixpence from the first bumpkin we meet on the road, by the old watchword, 'Stand and deliver;' and you'll have the gun to boot."

"Ay, that's a physical bribe," cried W—pe; and, after pausing a little, "The fellow flinches."

"And surely the reverse must hold," added S—k, "that, being a coward, he must be a highwayman."

"Why, you see, gents," said S—th coolly, "I don't mind a very great deal, you know, though I do take said sixpence from said bumpkin; but I won't do it, you know, on compulsion."

"If there's no compulsion, there's no robbery," said S—k.

"Oh, I mean *your* compulsion. As for mine, exercised on said bumpkin, let me alone for that part of the small affair; but none of your compulsion, if you love me. I can do anything, but not upon compulsion, you know."

"Done then!"

"Why, ye-e-s," drawled S—th, "done; I may say, gents, done; but I say with Sir John, don't misunderstand me, not upon compulsion, you know."

"Your own free will," shouted both the others, now pretty well to do in the world of dithyrambics. "Here's your instrument for extorting the sixpence by force or fear."

And this young man, half inebriated—with, we may here say parenthetically, a mother living in a garret in James' Square, with one son and an only daughter of a respectable though poor man, and who trusted to her son for being the means of her support—qualified, as we have seen, by high parts to extort from society respect, and we may add, though that has not appeared, to conciliate love and admiration—took willingly into his hand the old rusty “Innes,” to perpetrate upon the highway a robbery. And would he do it? You had only to look upon his face for an instant to be certain that he would; for he had all the lineaments of a young man of indomitable courage and resolution—the steady eye, the firm lip, all under the high brows of intellect, nor unmixed with the beauty that belongs to these moral expressions which in the playfulness of the social hour he had been reducing to materialism, well knowing all the while that he was arguing for effect and applause from those who only gave him the return of stultified petulance. What if that mother and sister, who loved him, and wept day and night over the wild follies that consumed his energies and demoralized his heart, had seen him now!

The bill was paid by S—k, who happened to have money, and who gave it on the implied condition of a similar one for all on another occasion. They went, or, as the phrase is often, sallied forth. The night had now come down with her black shadows. There was no moon. She was dispensing her favours among savages in another hemisphere, who, savages though they were, might have their devotions to their strange gods, resident with her up yonder, where no robbery is, save that of light from the pure fountain of heat and life. Yes, the darkness was auspicious to folly, as it often is to vice; and there was quietness too—no winds abroad to

speaking voices through rustling leaves, to terrify the criminal from his wild rebellion against the peace of nature. No night could have suited them better. Yes, all was favourable but God; and Him these wild youths had offended, as disobedient sons of poor parents, who had educated them well—as rebellious citizens among a society which would have hailed them as ornaments—as despisers of God’s temple, where grace was held out to them and spurned.

They were now upon the low road leading parallel to the beach, and towards the end of Inverleith Row. Nor had the devil left them with the deserted toddy-bowl. There was still pride for S—th, and for the others the rankling sense of inferiority in talent and of injury from scorching irony. Nor had they proceeded two miles, till the fatal opportunity loomed in the dark, in the form of a figure coming up from Leith or Edinburgh.

Now, S—th ;

Now, the cowardly Cartouche ;

Now, the poltroon Rob Roy ;

Now, the braggart Wallace !

But S—th did not need the taunts, nor, though many a patriotic cause wanted such a youth, was he left for other work, that night of devil-worship. The figure approached. Alas! the work so easy. S—th was right; how easy and cowardly, where the stranger was, in the confidence of his own heart, unprepared, un-weaponed! Yet those who urged him on leapt a dyke.

“Stand and deliver!” said S—th, with a handkerchief over his face.

“God help me!” cried the man, in a fit of new-born fear. “I’m a father, have wife and bairns; but I canna spare my life to a highwayman. Here, here, here.”

And fumbling nervously in his pocket, and shaking all over, not at all like the old object of similitude, but rather like a branch of a tree driven by the wind, he thrust something into S—th's hand, and rushing past him, was off on the road homewards. Nor was it a quick walk under fear, but a run, as if he thought he was or would be pursued for his life, or brought down by the long range of the gun he had seen in the hands of the robber.

Yes, it was easily done, and it was done; but how to be undone at a time when the craving maw of the noose dangled from the post, in obedience to the Procrustes of the time!

And S—th felt it was done. His hand still held what the man had pushed into it, but by-and-by it was as fire. His brain reeled; he staggered, and would have fallen, but for S—k, who, leaping the dyke, came behind him.

"What luck?"

"This," said S—th,—“the price of my life,” throwing on the ground the paper roll.

"Pound-notes," cried S—k, taking them up. "One, two, three, four, five; more than sixpence."

"Where is the man?" cried S—th, as, seizing the notes from the hands of S—k, he turned round. Then, throwing down the gun, he set off after his victim; but the latter was now ahead, though his pursuer heard the clatter of his heavy shoes on the metal road.

"Ho, there! stop! 'twas a joke—a bet."

No answer, and couldn't be. The man naturally thought the halloo was for further compulsion, under the idea that he had more to give, and on he sped with increased celerity and terror; nor is it supposed that he stopt till he got to his own house, a mile beyond Davidson's Mains.

Smith gave up the pursuit, and with the notes in his hand, ready to be cast away at every exacerbation of his fear, returned to his cowardly companions with hanging head and, if they had seen, with eyes rolling, as if he did not know where to look or what to do.

"What is to be done?" he cried; and his fears shook the others.

"Yes, what is to be done? You urged me on. Try to help me out. Let us go back and seek out this man. To-morrow it may be too late, when the police have had this robbery in their hands as a thing intended."

"We could not find the man though we went back," said S—k. And his companions agreed.

But W—pe, who had some acquaintanceship with the police Captain Stewart, proposed that they should proceed homewards, go to him, give him the money, and tell the story out.

"That, I fear, would be putting one's hand in the mouth of the hyæna at the moment he is laughing with hunger, as they say he does."

An opinion which S—th feared was too well founded. Nearly at their wits' end, they stood all three for a little quite silent, till the sound of a horse's clattering feet sounded as if coming from Davidson's Mains. All under the conviction of crime, they became alarmed; and as the rider approached, they concealed themselves behind the dyke, which ran by the side of the road. At that moment a man came as if from Edinburgh, and they could hear the rider, who did not, from his voice, appear to be the man who had been robbed, inquiring if he had met a young man with a gun in his hand. The man answered no, and off set the rider towards town at the rate of a hard trot. The few hopeful moments when anything could have been done effectually as a palinode and expiation

were past ; and S—th, releaping the dyke, was again upon the road in the depth of despair, and his companions scarcely less so. All his and their escapades had hitherto been at least within the bounds of the law ; and though his heart had often misgiven him, when called upon for the nourishment of his wild humours, as he thought of his widowed mother at home, without the comfort of the son she loved in spite of his errors, he had not ever yet felt the pangs of deep regret as they came preluding amendment. A terrible influx of feelings, which had been accumulating almost unknown to him during months and months—for his father had been dead only for a year and a half—pushed up against all the strainings of a wild natural temperament, and seemed ready to choke him, depriving him of utterance, and making him appear the very coward he had been depicting so sharply an hour before. A deep gloom fell over him ; nor was this rendered less inspissated by the recollection that came quick as lightning, that he was the only one known to the mistress of the inn. And now, worse and worse—for the same power that sent him that conviction threw a suspicion over his mind which made him strike his forehead with an energy alarming to his companions—no other—“ O, merciful God !” he muttered—than that the man he had robbed was his maternal uncle ; the only man among the friends of either his father or his mother who had shown any sympathy to the bereaved family, who had fed them and kept them from starvation, and by whom he had been himself nourished. He had no power to speak this : it was one of those thoughts that scathe the nerves that serve the tongue, and which flit and burn, and will not ameliorate their fierceness by the common means given to man in mercy. It now appeared to him as something miraculous why he did not recognise

him ; but the occasion was one of hurry and confusion, and so completely oblivious had he been in the agony which came on him in an instant, that he even thought that at the very moment he knew him, looking darkly, as he did, through the handkerchief over his eyes. In his despair, he meditated hurrying to Leith, and with the five pounds getting a passage over the sea somewhere, it signified nothing where, if away from the scene of his crime and ingratitude ; and this resolution was confirmed by the additional thought that Mr. Henderson, however good and generous, was a stern man—so stern, that he had ten years before given up a beloved son into the hands of justice for stealing ; yea, stern *ex corde* as Cato, if generous *ex crumena* as Codrus.

This resolution for a time brought back his love of freedom and adventure. He would go to Hudson's Bay, and shoot bears or set traps for wild silver-foxes, that would bring him gold ; or to Buenos Ayres, and catch the wild horse with the lasso ; or to Lima, and become a soldier of fortune, and slay men with the sword. The gleam of wild hope was shortlived—his triumph over his present ill a temporary hallucination. The laurel is the only tree which burns and crackles when green. The intention fled, as once more the thought of his mother came, with that vigour which was only of half an hour's birth, and begotten by young conscience on old neglect. They had been trailing their legs along till they came to Inverleith Row, where he behoved to have left his companions, if his resolution lasted ; for the road there goes straight on to Leith Harbour. He hesitated, and made an effort ; but S—k, who knew him, and fancied from the wild look of his eye that he meditated throwing himself into the deep harbour of Leith, took him by an arm, motioning to W—pe to take the other, and thus by a

very small effort—for really his resolution had departed, and his mind, so far as his intention went, was gone—they half forced him up the long row. When they arrived at Canonmills, here is the rider again, hurrying on: he had executed his commission, whatever it was, and was galloping home. But the moment he came forward, he pulled up. He had, by a glance under the light of a lamp, caught a sight of the gun in the hands of S—k, who had carried it when he took S—th's arm. The man shouted to a policeman,

“Seize that robber!”

“Which of them?”

“Him with the gun.”

And in an instant the cowardly dog who had done the whole business was laid hold of.

“The gun is mine,” cried S—th. “It is I who am answerable for whatever was done by him who carried that weapon. Take me, and let the innocent off. I say this young man is innocent.”

“Very gallant and noble,” said the man; “but when we go to the hills, we like the deer that bears the horns.”

“We are up to them tricks,” said the policeman. And S—k is borne along, with courage, if he ever had any, gone, and his eye looking terror.

S—th wanted to go along with him; but W—pe seized him by the arm again and dragged him up by the east side of Huntly Street, whereby they could get easily to James' Square.

In a few minutes more S—th was at his mother's door with the burning five pounds in his pocket. He had meditated throwing it away, but the hurrying course of thoughts had prevented the insufficient remedy from being carried into effect. When he opened the door he found his mother alone. The sister had not yet come from the warehouse where she earned five

shillings a week, almost the only source of her and the mother's living; for the money which S—th earned as a mere copying clerk in a writer's office, went mostly in some other direction. The mother soon observed, as she cast her eye over him, that there was something more than ordinary out of even his irregular way. He was pale, woe-worn, haggard; nor did he seem able to stand, but hurried to a chair and flung himself down, uttering confusedly, "Something to drink, mother—whisky."

"I hae nane, Charlie, lad," said she. "Never hae I passed a day like this since your father died. I have na e'en got the bit meat that a' get that are under God's protection. But what ails ye, dear Charlie?"

"Never mind me," replied the youth in choking accents. "I am better. Starving, starving! O God! and my doing. Yes, I am better—a bitter cure—starving," he again muttered; and searching his pockets, and throwing the five pounds on the table—"There, there, there," he added.

The mother took up the notes, and counted them slowly; for she had been inured to grief, and was always calm, even when her heart beat fast with the throbs of anguish.

"And whaur fae, laddie?" she said, as she turned her grey eye and scanned deeply the pale face of her son.

Silent, even dogged! Where now his metaphysics, his gibes on the physicalities, the moralities, the spiritualities?—all bundled up in a vibrating chord.

"Whaur fae, Charlie," had she repeated, still looking at him.

"The devil!" cried he, stung by her searching look, which brought back a gleam of the old rebellion.

"A gude paymaster to his servants," she said; "but

I'm no ane o' them yet; and may the Lord, wham I serve, even while his chastening hand is heavy upon me, preserve me frae his bribes!" And laying down the notes, she added, not lightly, as it might seem, but seriously, yet quietly,

"Nae wonder they're warm."

The notes had carried the heat of his burning hand.

"The auld story—billiards," said she again; "for they are the devil's cue and balls."

No answer; and the mother seating herself again, looked stedfastly and suspiciously at him; but she could not catch the eye of her son, who sat doggedly determined not to reveal his secret, and as determined also to elude her looks, searching as they were, and sufficient to enter his very soul. Yet she loved him too well to objurgate where she was only as yet suspicious; and in the quietness of the hour, she fell for a moment into her widowed habit of speaking as if none were present but herself.

"Wharfor bore I him—wharfor toiled and wrought for him for sae mony years, since the time he sat on my knee smiling in my face, as if he said, I will comfort you when you are old, and will be your stay and support? Was that smile then a lee, put there by the devil, wha has gi'en him the money to deceive me again?"

Then she paused.

"And how could that be? Love is not a cheat; and did ever bairn love a mither as he loved me? or did ever mither love her bairn as I hae loved him? Lord, deliver him frae his enemies, and mak him what he was in thae bygone days—sae innocent, sae cheerful, sae obedient; and I will meekly suffer a' Thou canst lay upon me."

The words reached the ears of the son, and the

audible sobs seemed to startle the solemn spirit of the hour and the place. "What would she say," he thought, "if she heard me declare I had robbed my uncle?"

At that moment the door opened, and in rushed little Jeanie S—th,—her face pale, and her blue eyes lighted with fear, and the thin delicate nostril distended, and hissing with her quick breathings,—

"Oh mither, there's twa officers on the stair seeking Charlie!"

And the quick creature, darting her eye on the table where the notes lay, snatched them up, and secreted them in her bosom; and, what was more extraordinary, just as if she had divined something more from her brother's looks, which told her that that money would be sought for by these officers, she darted off like a bird with a crumb in its bill, which it has picked up from beneath your eyes; but not before depositing, as she passed, a paper on a chair near the door.

"That creature is a spirit," said the mother. "She sees the evil in the dark before it comes, and wards it off like a guardian angel; but oh! she has little in her power to be an angel."

And rising, she took up the paper. It was only some bread and cheese, which the girl, knowing the privations of her mother, had bought with a part of her five shillings a week.

Thereafter, just as little Jeannie had intimated, came in two officers, with the usual looks of duty appearing through their professional sorrow.

"We want your son, good woman."

"He is there," said she; "but what want ye him for?"

"Not for going to church," said the man, forgetting

said professional sorrow in his love of a joke, "but for robbery on the highway; and we must search the house for five pounds in British Linen Company notes."

And the men proceeded to search, even putting their hands in the mother's pockets, besides rifling those of the son. They of course found nothing except the powder and shot, which had still remained there, and a handkerchief.

"That is something, anyhow," said one of the men, "and a great deal too. The one who is up in the office says true; he was not the man."

"No more he was," said Charles. "I am the man you ought to take; and take me."

"Sae, sae; just as I suspected," muttered the mother. "Lord, Lord! the cup runs over. It was e'en lipping when John died; but I will bear yet." And she seemed to grasp firmly the back of a chair, and compressed her lips—an attitude she maintained like a statue all the time occupied by the departure of her son. The door closed—he was gone; and she still stood, the *vivum cadaver*—the image of a petrified creature of misery.

Yet, overcome as her very calmness was, and enchanted for the moment into voicelessness and utter inaction, she was not that kind of women who sit and bear the stripes without an effort to ward them off. If Jeannie was as quick as lightning, she was sure as that which follows the flash. She thought for a moment, "God does not absolutely and for ever leave his servants." Some thought had struck her. She put on her bonnet and cloak deliberately, even looking into the glass to see if she was tidy enough for where she intended going, and for whom she intended to see.

And now this quiet woman is on her way down Broughton Street at twelve o'clock of a cold winter night, which, like her own mind, had only that calm-

ness which results from the exhaustion of sudden biting gusts from the north, and therefore right in her face. She drew her cloak round her. She had a long way to go, but her son was in danger of the gallows; and thoughtless, and as it now seemed, wicked as he was, he was yet her *son*. The very word is a volume of heart language—not the fitful expression of passion, but that quiet eloquence which bedews the eye and brings deep sighs with holy recollections of the childhood, and germinating hopes of future happiness up to the period when he would hang over her departing spirit. Much of all that had gone, and been replaced by dark forebodings of the future; and now there was before her the vision of an ignominious death as the termination of all these holy inspirations. But her faithful saying was always, “Wait, hope, and persevere;” and the saying was muttered a hundred times as she trudged weariedly, oh! how weariedly, for one who had scarcely tasted food for that day, and who had left untouched the gift brought by her loving daughter that night—for which, plain as it was, her heart yearned even amidst its grief, yea, though grief is said, untruly no doubt, to have no appetite. Perhaps not to those who are well fed; but nature is stronger than even grief, and she now felt the consequence of her disobedience to her behests in her shaking limbs and fainting heart. Yet she trudged and trudged on, shutting her mouth against her empty stomach to keep out the cold north wind. She is at the foot of Inverleith Row, and her face is to the west; she will now escape the desultory blasts by keeping close by the long running dyke. She passes the scene of the robbery without knowing it; else, doubtless, she would have stood and examined it by those instincts that force the spirit to such modes of satisfaction, as if the inanimate

thing could calm the spiritual. She was now drawing to Davidson's Mains: a little longer, and much past midnight, she was rapping, still in her quiet way, at the door of her brother.

The family had had something else to do than to sleep. There were the sounds of tongues and high words. Mrs. S—th was surprised, as well she might; for though sometimes Mr. Henderson partook freely of the bottle when he met old friends in town, he and the whole household were peaceable, orderly, and early goes to bed. The door was opened almost upon the instant; and Mrs. S—th was presently before Mr. Henderson and two others, one of whom held in his hand a whip.

"What has brought you here, Margaret, at this hour?"

"I want to speak privately to you."

"Just here; out with it," said he. "These are my friends; and if it is more money you want, you have come at an unlucky time, for I have been robbed by a villain of five pounds, which I could ill spare."

Mrs. S—th's heart died away within her. She clenched her hands to keep her from shaking; for she recollected the old story about his own son—a story which had got him the character of being harsh and unnatural. She could not mention her errand, which was nothing else than to induce her brother to use his influence in some way to get Charles out of the hands of the law. She could not utter even the word Charles, and all she could say was—

"Robbed!"

"Ay, robbed by a villain, whom I shall hang three cubits higher than Haman."

And the stern man even laughed at the thought of retribution. Yet, withal, no man could deny his generosity and general kindness, if, even immediately after,

he did not show it by slipping a pound into the hands of his needy sister.

"There," said he; "no more at present. I will call up and see you to-morrow morning, as I go to the police office to identify the villain. Meantime, take a dram, dear Peggy, and get home to bed. The night is cold, and see that you wrap yourself well up to keep *out* the wind and *in* the spirit; it's good whisky."

Shortly afterwards she was on her way home, with more than blasted hopes of what she had travelled for.

His uncle the man he had robbed! Even with all her forced composedness, this seemed too much—ay, so much too much, that she was totally overpowered. She paused to recover strength; and, looking forward, saw a thin flying shadow coming up to her, with a shriek of delight; and immediately she was hugged rapturously and kissed all over by little Jeannie, whose movements, as they ever were—so agile, so quick, so Protean—appeared to her, now that she was stolid with despair, as the postures and gestures of a creature appearing in a dream.

"Oh, I know all," she cried; "don't speak—nay, wait now till I return."

And the creature was off like a September meteor disappearing in the west, as if to make up again to the sun, far down away behind the hills from whence it had been struck off in the height of the day.

What can the strange creature mean? But she had had experience of her, and knew the instinctive divination that got at objects and results where reason in full-grown man would syllogize into the darkness of despair.

Nor was it long before she is running back, leaping with all the *abandon* of a romp, crying—

"I will save dear Charlie yet; for I love him as much as I hate that old curmudgeon."

"What does the girl mean? Whaur was you, bairn?" said her mother.

"Oh mother, how cold it is for you! Wrap the cloak about you."

"But what *is* it that you mean, Jeannie?"

"We shall be home by-and-by; come."

And, putting an arm round her mother's waist, she impelled her forward with the strength of her wythe of an arm.

"Come, come, there are ghosts about these woods;" and then she cowered, but still impelled.

Nor did the mother press the question she had already put twice; for, as we have said, she knew the nature of the girl, who ever took her own way, and had the art to make that way either filial obedience or loving conciliation.

"Oh, I'm so frightened for these ghosts!" she continued. "You know there was a murder here once upon a time. They're so like myself—wicked, and won't answer when they're spoken to, as I would not answer you, dear mother, just now; but wait till to-morrow, and you shall see that I am your own loving Jeannie."

"Weel, weel, bairn, we *will* see. But, oh, I'm muckle afraid; d'ye know, Jeannie, Charlie has been robbing! And wha, think ye, was the man—wha but—"

"Hush, hush, mother, I know it all already; but let me beneath your cloak, I'm so frightened."

And the little sprite got in, keeping her head and the little cup of a bonnet protruding every moment to look round; yet if it could have been seen in the dark, with such a sly, half-humorous eye, as betokened one of those curiously-made creatures who seem to be formed for studies to the thoroughgoing decent pacers of the world's stage.

"Ah! now we're all safe, as poor Charlie will be to-morrow," she cried, as they got to the foot of the long row, and she emerged in the light of one of the lamps, so like a flash from a cloud, running before her mother to get her to walk faster and faster, as if some scheme she had in her head was loitering under the impediment of her mother's wearied, oh, wearied step.

Having at length reached home, Jeannie ran and got the fire as bright as her own eye, crying out occasionally, as she glanced about,

"Poor Charlie in a dungeon!" and again, a few minutes after, when puffing at the fire with the bellows,

"No fire for dear Charlie; all dark and dismal!"

And then, running for the little paper packet with the cheese and bread, and setting it down,

"But he'll see the sun to-morrow, and will sleep in his own bed to-morrow night too; that he shall. Now eat, mother, for you will be hungry; and see you this!" as she took from her pocket a very tiny bottle, which would hold somewhere about a glass.

"Take that," filling out a little whisky.

"Oh dear, dear bairn, where learnt ye a' that witchery?" said the mother, looking at her.

But the sly look, sometimes without a trace of laughter in her face, was the only answer.

And now they are stretched in bed in each other's arms; but it was a restless night for both. And how different the manifestations of the restlessness! The groans of the elder for the fate of her only boy, now suspended on the scales of justice—one branch of the balance to be lopt off by Nemesis, and the other left with a noose in the string whereon to hang that erring, yet still beloved son; hysterical laughs from Jeannie in her dreams, as she saw herself undo the kench, and

Charlie let out, clapping his hands, and praying too, and kissing Jeannie, and other fantastic tricks of fancy in her own domain, unburdened with heavy clay which soils and presses upon her wings and binds her to earth, and to these monstrous likenesses of things, which she says are all a lying nature under the bonds of a blind fate, from where she cannot get free, even though she screams of murder and oppression and cruelty, and all the ills that earth-born flesh inherits from the first man.

Yet, for all these deductions from the sleep they needed, Jeannie was up in the morning early, infusing tea for herself and mother, muttering, as she whisked about,

“No breakfast for him made by me, who love him so dearly; but in this very house, ay, this night, he will have supper; and such a supper!”

In the midst of these scenes in the little room, a knock came to the door. It was a policeman, to say that she and her mother must be up to the office by ten.

“And shall we not?” said Jeannie, laughing; “wouldn’t I have been there at any rate?”

Then, a little after, came the stern Henderson, still ignorant of who robbed him. Mrs. S—th got up trembling, and looking at him with terror, so dark he appeared.

“Where is Charles?” he said.

“We don’t know,” said Jeannie, turning a side-glance at her mother. It was true she hated her uncle mortally, for the reason that, though he was to an extent generous to them, he was harsh too, and left them often poorly off, when from his wealth, which he concealed, he might have made them happy; and then how could they help the conduct of the son whose earnings ought to have relieved the uncle of even his small advances?

But though Jeannie hated the curmudgeon, who was, if he could, to hang her brother—worth to her all the world and a bit of heaven—the mother saw some change in the girl's conduct towards her uncle. Though pure as snow, she flew to him and hugged him with the art of one of the denizens of rougedom, and kissed him, and all the time was acting some by-play with her nimble fingers.

"Where is your box, you naughty uncle? Doesn't my mother like her eyes opened in the morning? Ah, here it is."

And getting the box, she carried it to her mother, who was still more surprised; for she never had got a pinch from Mr. Henderson nor any one, though she sometimes, for her breathing, took a draught of a pipe at night.

"It is empty, you witch," cried Henderson.

"Ah! then, my mother will not get her eyes opened." And she returned it into his pocket with these said subtle fingers.

The mother got dressed, and took a cup of Jeannie's tea, and in a few minutes they were all on their way to the police office. They found Captain Stewart in his room, and along with him the procurator-fiscal.

"Come away, Mr. Henderson; this is a bad business," said Stewart.

"The villain!" cried Henderson; "I hope he will hang for it."

"Ay, if guilty though, only," replied the captain.

"Would you know the man?" said the fiscal.

"No, he had a napkin over his face; but I could guess something from his size and voice."

"He admits the robbery," said Stewart; "but he has an absurd qualification about a frolic, which yet, I am bound to say, is supported by his accomplices."

"Then the money, five pounds, has not been got,"

said the fiscal. "This is a great want; for without it, I don't see what we can make of the case."

"Money here or money there, I've lost it anyhow; and if he isn't hanged, I'll not be pleased."

"Was there any but one man engaged in the affair?"

"Just one, and plenty."

"He had a gun?"

"Yes."

"Would you know it?"

"No. I was, to say the truth, too frightened to examine the instrument that was to shoot me."

"Then we have nothing but the admission and the testimony of the accomplices, who say it was a frolic," said Stewart.

"No frolic to me," cried Henderson. "Why then didn't they return the money?"

"They say they called and ran after you, and that you would not wait to get it back."

"Then why didn't they produce it to you?" said Henderson. "The money is appropriated."

"A circumstance," said the fiscal, "in itself sufficient to rebut the frolic. Yes, the strength of the case is there."

"So I thought," growled the man.

"You wasn't in liquor?"

"No."

"Are you ever?"

"I don't deny that in town I take a glass, but seldom so much as to affect my walking; never so much as make me dream I was robbed of money, and that too money gone from my pocket."

"Where do you carry your money?"

"In my waistcoat pocket. Sometimes I have carried a valuable bill home in my snuff-mull, when it was empty by chance."

"Where had you the five pounds?"

"I am not sure, but I think in my left waistcoat pocket."

"And you gave it on demand? It was not rifled from you?"

"I thrust it into the villain's hand, and ran."

"Well, we must confront you with the supposed robber," said the captain. "But you seem to be in choler, and I caution you against a precipitate judgment. You may naturally think the admission of the young men enough, and that may make you see what perhaps may not be to be seen. I confess the admission of *three* to be more than the law wants or wishes; yet there are peculiarities in this case that take it out of the general rules." Stewart then nodded to an officer, who went out and returned.

"There stands the prisoner."

"Charles S—th!" ejaculated the uncle: "my own nephew! execrable villain!"

And he looked at the youth with bated breath and fiery eyes.

There was silence for a few minutes. The officials looked pitiful. The mother hung down her head; and little Jeannie leered significantly, while she took the strings of her bonnet, tied them, undid them again, and flung away the ends till they went round her neck; nay, the playful minx was utterly dead to the condition of her brother who stood there, ashamed to look any one in the face, if he was not rather like an exhumed corpse; and we would not be far out if we said that she even laughed as she saw the curmudgeon staring like an angry mastiff at the brother she loved so well. But then, was she not an eccentric thing, driven hither and thither by vagrant impulses, and with thoughts in her head which nobody could understand?

"Was this the man who robbed you, Mr. Henderson?"

"Yes, the very man; now when I recollect. Stay, was there any handkerchief found on him?"

"Yes; that," said an officer, producing a red silk handkerchief.

"Why, I gave him that," said Mr. Henderson. "It cost me 4s. 6d.; and it was that he had over his face when he robbed me of my hard-earned money!"

"It is true," said Charles; "and sorry am I for the frolic, which my companions forced me into."

"A frolic with five pounds at its credit," said Mr. Henderson. "Where is the money, sir?"

"Ah! I know, dear uncle," cried the watchful Jeannie, in a piercing treble of the clearest silver.

All eyes were turned on Jeannie.

"Then where is it, girl?"

"I saw him put it in his snuff-mull last night when he was at mother's."

"Examine your box, Mr. Henderson."

The man growled, took out the box, and there was the five pounds. He looked at Jeannie as if he would have devoured her with his nose at a single pinch.

"Was Mr. Henderson sober, Miss S—th?"

"No."

"Was he drunk?"

"No. Only he couldn't stand scarcely, though he could walk; and he called mother Jeannie, and me Peggy, and he said 'twas a shame in us to burn two candles at his expense, when one was enough."

"*Saved by a pinch,*" cried Captain Stewart.

"Mr. Henderson," said the fiscal, "the case is done, and would never have come here if your nose had happened last night to be as itchy as your hand. The prisoner is discharged."

And no sooner had the words been uttered than Jeannie flew to her brother, hung round his neck, kissed him, blubbered and played such antics that the fiscal could not refrain searching for his handkerchief. He found it too; but just as if this article were no part of his official property, he returned it to his pocket; and then, as he saw Charles leaning on his mother's breast, and making more noise with his heart and lungs than he could have done if he had been hanged, he resolved, after due deliberation, to let the "hanging drop" have its own way in sticking on the top of his cheek, and determined not to fall for all his jerking.

"BARBADOES, 15th July 18—.

"MY DEAREST LITTLE JEANNIE,—I am at length settled the manager of a great sugar factory, with £400 a year. Tell your mother I will write her by next post; and all I can say meantime is, that Messrs. Coutts and Co. will pay her £100 a year, half-yearly, till I return to keep you, for saving me from the gallows. Accept the offer of the old man. He is worth £500 a year; and you're just the little winged spirit that will keep up a fire of life in a good heart only a little out of use.

"*P.S.*—Tell uncle that I will send him five pounds of snuff, by next ship, in return for the five pounds I took out of his box on that eventful night, which was the beginning of my reformation.

"Tell Mrs. S—k and Mrs. W—pe that their sons arrived at Jamaica; but, poor fellows, they are both dead.

"The same vessel that carries the snuff will convey to mother a hogshead of sugar and a puncheon of rum. So that at night, in place of the tiny phial which held a glass, and which you used to draw out of your pocket so sily when mother was weakly, you may now mix for

her a tumbler of rum-punch ; and if you don't take some too, I'll send you no more. But, hark ye, Jeannie, don't give uncle a *drop*, though he tried to give me one that, I fear, would have made my head, like yours, a little giddy. Adieu, dear little Ariel."

THE PROCRASTINATOR.

BEING overtaken by a shower in Kensington Gardens, I sought shelter in one of the alcoves near the palace. I was scarce seated, when the storm burst with all its fury; and I observed an old fellow, who had stood loitering till the hurricane whistled round his ears, making towards me, as rapidly as his apparently palsied limbs would permit. Upon his nearer approach, he appeared rather to have suffered from infirmity than years. He wore a brownish-black coat, or rather shell, which, from its dimensions, had never been intended for the wearer; and his inexpressibles were truly inexpressible. "So," said I, as he seated himself on the bench, and shook the rain from his old broad-brimmed hat, "you see, old boy, '*Procrastination is the thief of time*;' the clouds gave you a hint of what was coming, but you seemed not to take it." "It is," replied he, eagerly. "Doctor Young is in the right. Procrastination has been my curse since I was in leading-strings. It has grown with my growth, and strengthened with my strength. It has ever been my besetting sin—my companion in prosperity and adversity; and I have slept upon it, like Samson on the lap of Delilah, till it has shorn my locks and deprived me of my strength. It has been to me a witch, a manslayer, and a murderer; and when I would have shaken it off in wrath and in disgust, I found I was no longer master of my own actions and my own house. It had brought around me a host of its blood relations—its sisters and its cousins-german—to fatten on my weakness, and haunt me to

the grave; so that when I tore myself from the embrace of one, it was only to be intercepted by another. You are young, sir, and a stranger to me; but its effects upon me and my history—the history of a poor paralytic shoemaker—if you have patience to hear, may serve as a beacon to you in your voyage through life.”

Upon expressing my assent to his proposal—for the fluency and fervency of his manner had at once riveted my attention and excited curiosity—he continued:—

“I was born without a fortune, as many people are. When about five years of age, I was sent to a parish school in Roxburghshire, and procrastination went with me. Being possessed of a tolerable memory, I was not more deficient than my schoolfellows; but the task which they had studied the previous evening was by me seldom looked at till the following morning, and my seat was the last to be occupied of any other on the form. My lessons were committed to memory by a few hurried glances, and repeated with a faltering rapidity, which not unfrequently puzzled the ear of the teacher to follow me. But what was thus hastily learned, was as suddenly forgotten. They were mere surface impressions, each obliterated by the succeeding. And though I had run over a tolerable general education, I left school but little wiser than when I entered it.

“My parents—peace to their memory!”—here the old fellow looked most feelingly, and a tear of filial recollection glistened in his eyes: it added a dignity to the recital of his weakness, and I almost revered him—“My parents,” continued he, “had no ambition to see me rise higher in society than an honest tradesman; and at thirteen I was bound apprentice to a shoemaker. Yes, sir, I was—I am a shoemaker; and but for my curse—my malady—had been an ornament to my profession. I have measured the foot of a

princess, sir ; I have made slippers to his Majesty!" Here his tongue acquired new vigour from the idea of his own importance. "Yes, sir, I have made slippers to his Majesty ; yet I am an unlucky—I am a bewitched—I am a ruined man. But to proceed with my history. During the first year of my apprenticeship, I acted in the capacity of errand boy ; and, as such, had to run upon many an unpleasant message—sometimes to ask money, frequently to borrow it. Now, sir, I am also a *bashful* man, and, as I was saying, *bashfulness* is one of the blood relations which procrastination has fastened upon me. While acting in my last-mentioned capacity, I have gone to the house, gazed at every window, passed it and repassed it, placed my hand upon the rapper, withdrawn it, passed it and repassed it again, stood hesitating and consulting with myself, then resolved to defer it till the next day, and finally returned to my master, not with a direct lie, but a broad *equivocation* ; and this was another of the cousins-german which procrastination introduced to my acquaintance.

"In the third year of my servitude, I became fond of reading ; was esteemed a quick workman ; and, having no desire for money beyond what was necessary to supply my wants, I gave unrestricted indulgence to my new passion. We had each an allotted quantity of work to perform weekly. Conscious of being able to complete it in half the time, and having yielded myself solely to my ruinous propensity to delay, I seldom did anything before the Thursday ; and the remaining days were spent in hurry, bustle, and confusion. Occasionally I overrated my abilities—my task was unfinished, and I was compelled to count a *dead horse*. Week after week this grew upon me, till I was so firmly saddled, that, until the expiration of my ap-

prenticeship, I was never completely freed from it. This was another of my curse's handmaidens."

Here he turned to me with a look of seriousness, and said, "Beware, young man, how you trust to your own strength and your own talents; for however noble it may be to do so, let it be in the open field, before you are driven into a corner, where your arms may come in contact with the thorns and the angles of the hedges.

"About this time, too, I fell in love—yes, *fell* in love; for I just beheld the fair object, and I was a dead man, or a new man, or anything you will. Frequently as I have looked and acted like a fool, I believe I never did so so strikingly as at that moment. She was a beautiful girl—a very angel of light—about five feet three inches high, and my own age. Heaven knows how I ever had courage to declare my passion; for I put it off day after day, and week after week, always preparing a new speech against the next time of meeting her, until three or four rivals stepped forward before me. At length I did speak, and never was love more clumsily declared. I told her in three words; then looked to the ground, and again in her face most pitifully. She received my addresses just as saucily as a pretty girl could do. But it were useless to go over our courtship; it was the only happy period of my existence, and every succeeding day has been misery. Matters were eventually brought to a bearing, and the fatal day of final felicity appointed. I was yet young, and my love possessed all the madness of a first passion. She not only occupied my heart, but my whole thoughts; I could think of nothing else, speak of nothing else, and, what was worse, do nothing else: it burned up the very capabilities of action, and rendered my native indolence yet more indolent. However, the

day came (and a bitter stormy day it was), the ceremony was concluded, and the honeymoon seemed to pass away in a fortnight.

“About twelve months after our marriage, Heaven (as authors say) blest our loves with a son and, I had almost said, heir. Deplorable patrimony!—heir of his mother’s features—the sacrifice of his father’s weakness.” Kean could not have touched this last burst. The father, the miserable man, parental affection, agony, remorse, repentance, were expressed in a moment.

A tear was hurrying down his withered cheek as he dashed it away with his dripping sleeve. “I am a weak old fool,” said he, endeavouring to smile; for there was a volatile gaiety in his disposition, which his sorrows had subdued, but not extinguished. “Yet, my boy! my poor dear Willie!—I shall never—no, I shall never see him again!” Here he again wept; and had nature not denied me that luxury, I should have wept too, for the sake of company. After a pause, he again proceeded:—

“After the birth of my child, came the baptism. I had no conscientious objection to the tenets of the Established Church of my country; but I belonged to no religious community. I had never thought of it as an obligation beyond that of custom, and deferred it from year to year, till I felt ashamed to ‘go forward’ on account of my age. My wife was a Cameronian; and to them, though I knew nothing of their principles, I had an aversion. But for her to hold up the child while I was in the place, was worse than heathenism—was unheard-of in the parish. The nearest Episcopal chapel was at Kelso, a distance of ten miles. The child still remained unbaptized. ‘It hasna a name yet,’ said the ignorant meddlers, who had no higher

idea of the ordinance. It was a source of much uneasiness to my wife, and gave rise to some family quarrelling. Months succeeded weeks, and eventually the child was carried to the Episcopal church. This choked up all the slander of the town, and directed it into one channel upon my devoted head. Some said I 'wasna sound,' and all agreed I 'was nae better than I should be,' while the zealous clergyman came to my father, expressing his fears that 'his son was in a bad way.' For this, too, am I indebted to procrastination. I thus became a martyr to supposed opinions, of which I was ignorant; and such was the unchristian bigotry of my neighbours, that, deeming it sinful to employ one whom they considered little other than a pagan, about five years after my marriage I was compelled to remove with my family to London.

"We were at this period what tradesmen term *miserably hard up*. Having sold off our little stock of furniture, after discharging a few debts which were unavoidably contracted, a balance of rather less than two pounds remained; and upon this, my wife, my child, and myself were to travel a distance of three hundred and fifty miles. I will not go over the journey: we performed it on foot in twenty days; and, including lodging, our daily expense amounted to one shilling and eightpence; so that, on entering the metropolis, all we possessed was five shillings and a few pence. It was the dead of winter, and nearly dark, when we were passing down St. John Street, Clerkenwell. I was benumbed, my wife was fainting, and our poor child was blue and speechless. We entered a public-house near Smithfield, where two pints of warm porter and ginger, with a crust of bread and cheese, operated as partial restoratives. The noisy scene of butchers, drovers, and coal-heavers was new

to me. My child was afraid, my wife uncomfortable, and I, a gaping observer, forgetful of my own situation. My boy pulled my coat, and said, 'Come, father;' my wife jogged my elbow, and reminded me of a lodging; but my old reply, '*Stop a little*,' was my ninety and nine times repeated answer. Frequently the landlord made a long neck over the table, gauging the contents of our tardily emptied pint; and, as the watchman was calling 'Past eleven,' finally took it away, and bade us 'bundle off.' Now I arose, feeling at once the pride of my spirit and the poorness of my purse, vowing never to darken his door again, should I remain in London a hundred years.

"On reaching the street, I inquired at a half-grown boy where we might obtain a lodging; and after causing me to inquire twice or thrice—'I no ken, Sawney—haud awa' north,' said the brat, sarcastically imitating my accent. I next inquired of a watchman, who said there was no place upon his beat; but *beat* was Gaelic to me; and I repeated my inquiry to another, who directed me towards the hells of Saffron Hill. At a third, I requested to be informed the way, who, after abusing me for seeking lodgings at such an hour, said he had seen me in the town six hours before, and bade us go to the devil. A fourth inquired if we had any money, took us to the bar of a public-house, called for a quartern of gin, drank our healths, asked if we could obtain a bed, which being answered in the negative, he hurried to the door, bawling 'Half-past eleven,' and left me to pay for the liquor. On reaching Saffron Hill, it was in an Irish uproar: policemen, thieves, prostitutes, and Israelites were brawling in a satanic mass of iniquity; blood and murder was the order of the night. My child screamed, my wife clung to my arm; she would not,

she durst not, sleep in such a place. To be brief: we had to wander in the streets till the morning; and I believe that night, aided by a broken heart, was the forerunner of her death. It was the first time I had been compelled to walk trembling for a night without shelter, or to sit frozen on a threshold; and this, too, I owe to procrastination.

“For a time we rented a miserable garret, without furniture or fixture, at a shilling weekly, which was paid in advance. I had delayed making application for employment till our last sixpence was spent. We had passed a day without food; my child appeared dying; my wife said nothing, but she gazed upon her dear boy, and shook her head with an expression that wrung me to the soul. I rushed out almost in madness, and, in a state of unconsciousness, hurried from shop to shop in agitation and in misery. It was vain; appearances were against me. I was broken down and dejected, and my state of mind and manner appeared a compound of the maniac and the black-guard. At night I was compelled to return to the suffering victims of my propensity, penniless and unsuccessful. It was a dreadful and a sleepless night with us all; or if I did slumber upon the hard floor for a moment (for we had neither seat nor covering), it was to startle at the cries of my child wailing for hunger, or the smothered sighs of my unhappy partner. Again and again I almost thought them the voice of the Judge, saying, ‘Depart from me, ye cursed.’

“I again hurried out with daybreak, for I was wretched, and resumed my inquiries; but night came, and I again returned equally successful. The yearnings of my child were now terrible, and the streaming eyes of his fond mother, as she pressed his head with her cold hand upon her lap, alone distinguished her

from death. The pains of hunger in myself were becoming insupportable; my teeth gnashed against each other, and worms seemed gnawing my heart-strings. At this moment, my dear wife looked me in the face, and, stretching her hand to me, said, 'Farewell, my love, in a few hours I and our dear child shall be at rest! Oh! hunger, hunger!' I could stand no more. Reason forsook me. I could have died for them; but I could not beg. We had nothing to pledge. Our united wearing apparel would not have brought a shilling. My wife had a pair of pocket Bibles (I had once given them in a present): my eyes fell upon them—I snatched them up unobserved—rushed from the house, and—Oh heaven! let the cause forgive the act—pawned them for eighteen-pence. It saved our lives, it obtained employment, and for a few weeks appeared to overcome my curse.

"I am afraid I grow tedious with particulars, sir; it is an old man's fault—though I am not old either; I am scarce fifty-five. After being three years in London, I was appointed foreman of an extensive establishment in the Strand. I remained in this situation about four years. It was one of respectability and trust, demanding, hourly, a vigilant and undivided attention. To another, it might have been attended with honour and profit; but to me it terminated in disgrace. Amongst other duties, I had the payment of the journeymen, and the giving out of the work. They being numerous, and their demands frequent, it would have required a clerk for the proper discharge of that duty alone. I delayed entering at the moment in my books the materials and cash given to each, until they, multiplying upon my hands, and begetting a consequent confusion, it became impossible for me to make their entry with certainty or correctness. The workmen were not slow

in discovering this, and not a few of the more profligate improved upon it to their advantage. Thus I frequently found it impossible to make both ends of my account meet; and in repeated instances, where the week's expenditure exceeded the general average, though satisfied in my own mind of its accuracy, from my inability to state the particulars, in order to conceal my infirmity, I have accounted for the overplus from my own pocket. Matters went on in this way for a considerable time. You will admit I was rendered feelingly sensible of my error, and I resolved to correct it. But my resolutions were always made of paper; they were like a complaisant debtor—full of promises, praying for grace, and dexterously evading performance. Thus, day after day, I deferred the adoption of my new system to a future period. For, sir, you must be aware there is a pleasure in procrastination, of a nature the most alluring and destructive; but it is a pleasure purchased by the sacrifice of judgment: in its nature and results it resembles the happiness of the drunkard; for, in exact ratio as our spirits are raised above their proper level, in the same proportion, when the ardent effects have evaporated, they sink beneath that level.

“I was now too proud to work as a mere journeyman, and I commenced business for myself; but I began without capital, and a gourd of sorrow hung over me, while I stood upon sand. I had some credit; but, as my bills became payable, I ever found I had put off, till the very day they became due, the means of liquidating them; then had I to run and borrow five pounds from one, and five shillings from another, urged by despair, from a hundred quarters. My creditors grew clamorous; my wife upbraided me; I flew to the bottle—to the bottle!” he repeated; “and my ruin was complete—my family, business, everything, was ne-

glected. Bills of Middlesex were served on me, declarations filed ; I surrendered myself, and was locked up in Whitecross Street. It is a horrid place ; the Fleet is a palace to it ; the Bench, paradise ! But, sir, I will draw my painful story to a close. During my imprisonment my wife died—died, not by my hands, but from the work of them ! She was laid in a strange grave, and strangers laid her head in the dust, while I lay a prisoner in the city where she was buried. My boy—my poor Willie—who had been always neglected, was left without father and without mother ! Sir ! sir ! my boy was left without food ! He forsook visiting me in the prison ; I heard he had turned the associate of thieves ; and from that period five years have passed, and I have obtained no trace of him. But it is my doing—my poor Willie !”

Here the victim of procrastination finished his narrative. The storm had passed away, and the sun again shone out. The man had interested me, and we left the gardens together. I mentioned that I had to go into the city ; he said he had business there also, and asked to accompany me. I could not refuse him. From the door by which we left the gardens, our route lay by way of Oxford Street. As we proceeded down Holborn, the church bell of St. Sepulchre’s began to toll ; and the crowd, collected round the top of Newgate Street, indicated an execution. As we approached the place, the criminal was brought forth. He was a young man about nineteen years of age, and had been found guilty of an aggravated case of housebreaking. As the unhappy being turned round to look upon the spectators, my companion gave a convulsive shriek, and, springing from my side, exclaimed, “ Righteous Heaven ! my Willie ! my murdered Willie !” He had proceeded but a few paces, when he fell with his face upon the ground.

In the wretched criminal he discovered his lost, his only son. The miserable old man was conveyed, in a state of insensibility, to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, where I visited him the next day: he seemed to suffer much, and in a few hours he died with a shudder, and the word *procrastination* on his tongue.

THE TEN OF DIAMONDS.

At length I reached the Moated Grange, on a visit to my friend Græme. But since I am to speak a good deal of this place, I may as well explain that it was misnamed. There was no moat, nor had there been for a hundred years; but round the old pile—hoary, and shrivelled, and palsied enough, in all conscience, for delighting the mole-eye of any antiquarian hunks—there was a visible trace of the old ditch in a hollow covered with green sward going all round the house, which hollow was the only place clear of trees. And these trees! They stood for a mile round, like an army of giants seventy feet high, all intent, it would seem, upon choking the poor old pile, throwing their big arms over the hollow, swinging them to and fro, and dashing their points against the panes as the wind listed. It would come by-and-by to be a hard task for the stone and lime victim to hold its place, with its sinews of run mortar, against these tyrants of the wood. And then they were as full of noises as Babel itself—noises a thousand times more heterogeneous—croaking, chirping, screeching, cawing, whistling, billing, cooing, cuckooing. “What a place to live in!” I thought, fresh as I was from town, “where, if there are noises, one knows something of their meaning—maledictory, yea, devilish as it often is, expressive of the passions of men which will never sleep. But these! what could one make of such a *tintamarre*? Nothing but the reflection—that is, if you happen to be a philosopher,

which, thank God, I am not—that not one note of all this rural oratorio is without its intention; and thus we always satisfy ourselves. But when we run the matter up a little further, we find it a very small affair: two responses, one to each of two chords vibrating for ever and ever throughout all nature—pleasure and pain, pain and pleasure, turn by turn—the last pain being death!”

“How can you live here, Græme?” I said, as we stood under the old porch, looking out, or rather having our look blocked up by the thickness, and our ears deaved by the eternal screeching and cawing of five thousand crows overhead.

“There’s gloom everywhere where man is,” he replied, “and screeching owls in every brain. You can’t get quit. Then, lowering his voice, “I am haunted, and yet live here in this Moated Grange! The difference is this: in the town the gaslight and eternal clatter distract a man like me who is plagued from within; here I find some concord between the inside and the out, only the owls in the inside are more grotesque and horrible.”

“Well, Græme,” said I, “it is needless to disguise what brought me here. The secret is out. The choke-damp has got wind. If the idiot had not blown his brains out, it would have been nothing. You could have paid him back, and he might now have had both his money and his brains.”

“Got wind!” cried he, clutching me by the breast of the coat with the fury of a highwayman or a spasmodic actor. “Did the villain Ruggieri tell you?”

“No.”

“So far well,” he added, taking a long pull with his lungs, as if he had got quit of an attack of asthma; “but though I may satisfy the widow, how am I to

appease Heaven? Come," he added, again seizing me with a force in which there was a tremble, "I want to ease my mind. You are my oldest friend, and a load divided is more easily carried."

And leading the way into the parlour, where the fire had got into a fine red heat, and was sending a glare through the ruby and golden contents of several strangely-shaped bottles on the table, he threw himself on a chair on the one side, I taking one on the other. A few minutes of silence intervened.

"If it be as painful for you," he continued, "to hear a confession as it is for me to make it, you may help yourself to bear the infliction by pouring into your stomach some of that Burgundy. I will take none. I have fire enough in my brain already;" and he pushed the bottle to me.

"You were a bit of a blackleg yourself," he continued, as he threw himself back in the arm-chair, and compressed his chest with his folded arms till the blood seemed to mount to his face. "You were present at that game where I took the five thousand by a trick from Gourlay. You know, as a gambler yourself, that all the tribe are by constitution cheats. It is folly to speak of an honest gambler. The passion is a ten thousand times distilled selfishness, with no qualm of obligation to God or religion to keep it in check—only a little fear of that bugbear, society. Our club at the 'Red Lion' all knew this in our souls; but every one of us knew also that the moment he would be discovered cheating, he would be scorched with our hatred and contempt. He must leave our pure society on the instant—not of course that he was any worse than the rest of us, but only that he was unfortunate in being discovered. That night Gourlay and I were demons. We had baffled each other, and drank till our brains

seethed, though our countenances and speech betrayed nothing but the extreme of coolness. He had won a thousand of me, and hounded me from post to pillar, offering to be cleared out by my *skill*, as he called it sneeringly. The fellow, in short, hated me, because the year before, at Baden-Baden, I had taken two thousand out of him, and would not give him his revenge."

"He must have thought you honest," said I; "otherwise he would not have thus badgered you to play."

"No; he had not the generosity to think me honest. I repeat, no gambler ever thinks another gambler honest, and he lies when he says so. He knew himself to be a rogue, and thought it diamond in the teeth of diamond;" and, pausing and meditating, he repeated the word, "diamond—diamond—diamond."

I looked at him in surprise. He continued to keep up the cuckoo sound, trying to laugh, and yet totally unable to accomplish even a cackle, as if some internal force clutched the diaphragm and mocked him, so that his efforts were reduced to a gurgling as in cynanche—like a dog choking with a rope round his craig, the sounds coming jerking out in barks, and dying away again in yelps and whines.

"You will know presently why that word produces these strange effects upon me," he at length contrived to be able to say. "Nor less the form of the figure as painted in these hell-books. It is blazoned everywhere. The devil wears it in fiery lines on his face as he hounds me a-nights through these thick woods. Yet I am not afraid of it—rather court it, as if I yearned for the burning pain of its red signature in, and in, and in to my brain, as far as thought goes."

"Have you got mad, Græme?" I ejaculated. "What has the figure of a diamond, or of ten diamonds——"

"*Ten*, you would say?" he immediately cried, as he started up, and immediately threw himself down; "*the ten*, if you dared. You are commissioned by the powers yonder—you, you, too, along with the others, including the devil."

"I have no wish to be in the same commission with that great personage," said I, with a very poor attempt to laugh, for I felt anxious about my friend. "I gave him up when I threw his books into the fire, and swore never more to touch the unhallowed thing."

I perceived that my attempt at humour increased his excitement. "Repeat the words," he cried. "Say 'the ten of diamonds' right out with open mouth, and repeat them a thousand times, so as to give me ear-proof that the powers yonder," pointing to the roof, "are against me."

At this moment the door of the parlour was opened by some timid hand.

"Come hither, my pretty Edith," he said, in a calmer voice, as a little cherub-looking child, with a head so like as if, after the fashion of Danæ's, it had been powdered by Jupiter with gold dust, and a pair of blue eyes, as if the said god, in making them, had tried to emulate the wing of the Halcyon in a human orb, and intended, moreover, the light thereof to calm the storm in those of her father.

And so it did, to a certain extent; for Edith got upon his knee, and, putting her arms round his neck, kept peering with those eyes into the very pupils of her father's, till the light of innocence, softening the rigid nerve, enabled them to regain somewhat of their natural lustre.

"What did Trott, the crazy girl who spae fortunes, give you, Edith?" and coruscations began again to mix with the softer light.

"A card," replied the girl, as she undid her embrace, and, casting her head to a side, viewed him timidly.

"She has been frightened," thought I, "by some consequences resulting from the same question put at some former time."

"And what was the name of the card?" he continued.

But the girl was now on her guard. She hesitated, and struggled to get away.

"Tell this gentleman, then."

"The ten of diamonds," cried she; and no sooner were the words out than she fled, like a beam of light chased by the shadow of a tombstone.

"You see how it is," continued Græme, getting into his former expression: "through this channel, this innocent medium, this creature the fruit of my loins, the idol of my heart, is the lightning of reproof hurled. A wandering idiot is prompted by the very inspiration of her imbecility to put into the hands of my child the emblem of my wickedness, that she in her love might place it before my eyes, there to develop the sin-print in the dark camera of my mind. No wonder she is alarmed at the mention of the words, for she read the horror produced in me when she held up what she called the pretty picture in my face. But, thank God! thank God!"——

And he fell for a moment into meditation.

"For what?" said I, as my wonder increased.

"That her mother, who is within a week of her confinement, knows nothing of this mystery."

I was silent. I might have said, "What mystery?" but I would only have irritated him.

"Rymer!"

I started. I was looking into the fire, with my ear altogether his, yet the strange mention of my name startled me.

“What could infamy—infamy, with just a beam of consciousness to tell it was infamy, and no more but that beam—think and feel to be worshipped by purity and love? I have shrunk from the embrace of that woman with a recoil equal to that produced by the enfolding of a snake.”

“Though she knows not, and may never know, anything of this affair which has taken such a hold of you?” said I, rather as a speaking automaton, forced to venerate.

“The very reason why I recoil and shudder.”

I had made a mistake—I would not risk another. “The man has got into the enfolding arms of mania,” I thought, “and I must be chary.”

“Will you keep in your remembrance,” he continued, “the words uttered by Edith, and how she came by them? Will you?”

“Yes.”

“Then take another glass; you will need it, and another too.”

I obeyed not quite so mechanically. The Burgundy was better than the conversation, and I made the pleasure of the palate compensate for the pain of the ear.

He now drew out his watch, and, going to the window, withdrew the curtains. The shades of night had fallen. It looked black as Tartarus, contrasted with the light within.

“Come here!” he cried; and when I had somewhat reluctantly obeyed what I considered the request of one whose internal sense had got a jerk from some mad molecule out of its orbit in the brain—“Do you see anything?”

“Yes,” said I—“a big black negative; but as for anything positive, you might as well look into a coal-

pit and find what philosophers do in the wells of truth. There's nothing to be seen."

"No? Look there—there! See," pointing with his finger, and clutching me tremulously, "once more—the traces as vivid as ever! *Seè!*"

I verily did think I saw something luminous, but it quickly disappeared. "Oh, probably the reflection of a lantern," I said.

"Yes, a magic one," he replied sneeringly.

"I know of no more magical lantern than a man's head," I replied, a little disconcerted by his sneer. "Chemists say there's more phosphorus in the brain than anywhere else; and so I sometimes think."

He made no reply, but, seizing me by the coat, dragged me after him as he hurried out of the room, and making for a back door, led me out, bareheaded as I was, into the wood. The darkness had waxed to pitchiness, and the noises were hushed. The crows had gone to roost; and had it not been for some too-hoos of the jolly owl, sounding his horn as he rejoiced that the hated sun had gone to annoy other owls in the west, the silence would have been complete. But, in truth, I hate silence as well as darkness, and have no more sympathy with the followers of Pythagoras than I have with the triumph of the blind Roman who silenced the covey of pretty women, in the heat of their condolences for his blindness, by reminding them that they forgot he could feel in the dark. I thought more of the fire inside, and the bottle of Burgundy, on which I had made as yet only a small impression.

"If I want darkness, I can as well shut my eyes," said I peevishly, "and I would even have the advantage of some phosphorescent touches of the fancy."

"Will you see that with your eyes shut?" he exclaimed triumphantly, as he bent his body forward to

an angle of forty-five, and pointed with his finger to an object clearly illumined, and exhibiting distinctly a large card, with ten red diamonds sharply traced upon it. The advantage he had got over me was lost in the rapture of his gaze; and he seemed to be charmed by the apparition, for he began to move slowly forward, still pointing his finger, and without apparently drawing a breath. Though a little taken by surprise for the instant, it was not easy for me to give up my practical wisdom, which, as a matter of course, pointed to a trick.

"You do see it, then?" said he.

"Surely," said I. "There is no mistake it is the figure of the ten of diamonds, probably stuck upon a turnip lantern."

"I did not ask you for a banter," he replied angrily. "I can draw my own conclusions. All I wanted was to satisfy myself that I was free from a monomaniacal illusion. We cannot both be mad; besides, you're a sceptic, and the testimony of a sceptic's eyes is better than the sneer of his tongue."

Still he proceeded, I following, and the apparition retreating. "I told you to remember what Edith said," he continued, as he still pointed his finger; "and I fancy you can never forget that before you. The two things are wide apart."

"And so are the two ends of a rope with which a man hangs himself," said I.

"It is gone!" cried my friend, without noticing my remark. "It has receded into that infinite from whence it was commissioned to earth to strike its lightning upon the eye of a falling, erring, miserable mortal."

"It is gone," said I; "and I am gone also—to finish my bottle of Burgundy, which I have as little doubt

was commissioned from finitude to strike a little fire into the heart of another erring mortal, not at this moment perfectly happy."

And I made my way as quick as possible into the parlour, glad to get quit of the chill of the night air. Meanwhile, there appeared signs of some extraordinary movement in the other parts of the house, the nature of which Græme probably ascertained as he came along the lobby, for I heard bustling and earnest conversation; and presently little Edith came stepping in beside me, with something very mysterious in her blue eyes, far too mysterious for being confided to loud words, and so a whisper told me that her mother was taken ill, and that Dr. Rogers had been sent for. This little bit of information carried more to my mind than it brought away from Edith's. I knew before that Mrs. Græme was on the eve of confinement, and it now appeared she had been taken in labour. I saw, too, that my visit had not been very well timed, and the worse that Græme himself was in the extraordinary frame of mind in which I found him—unfit for facing the dangers, repaying the affections, performing the duties, and receiving the honours or enjoying the hopes of his situation. A rap at the door was the signal for Edith's departure, with the words on her tongue that she knew the doctor's knock. I was now, I thought, to be left to myself; nor was I displeased, for I wanted a lounge and a meditation; though of the latter I could not see that I could make much, if any, more than confirming myself against all preternaturals as agents on earth, however certain their existence may be beyond the mystic veil that divides the two worlds. I had known Græme's crime and Gourlay's self-murder; but the crime was a trick among black-legs, and the suicide was the madness of a gambler,

who had risked his money and was ruined at the moment he wanted to ruin another. Surely Heaven had something else to do with its retributive lightnings than employ them, in subversion of all natural laws, in a cause so inferior in turpitude to others that every hour pass into oblivion, with more of a mark of natural, and less or none of supernatural chastisement. I thought I might be contented with such a view of these prodigies as might quickly consign them to the limbo of men's machinations; yet somehow or other—perhaps the Burgundy bottle, if it could have spoken, like that of Asmodeus, might have helped the solution—I got dreamy, and of course foolish, raising objections against my own conclusions, and instituting an *alter ego* to argue against myself for Græme's theory. It has always seemed strange to me, that though mankind hate metaphysics, they are all natural metaphysicians, especially when a little *wined*. Perhaps the true reason may be, that as wine came from the gods, it is endued with the power of raising us to its source. At least, our aspirations, from being *devine*, become wonderfully *divine*, so that supernatural agencies wax less difficult to our imaginations; and while we are ten times more ready to meet a ghost, we are as many times more ready to admit their possibility. But the end of these grand and elevated conditions is generally sleep and an ugly nightmare; and though my case was an exception as regards the latter, I awoke in not a very happy mood, just as Græme entered the room and told me it was twelve o'clock. As I rubbed my eyes, he sat down in his chair, and seemed inclined to court silence; but it was clear he could not achieve repose.

I felt no inclination to add to his apparent disturbance by any remarks on what I had seen; but it

struck me as remarkable, that, while he got into contortions and general restlessness, putting his hand to his brow, throwing one leg over another, closing his hands, and heaving long sighs, he never so much as thought it worth his pains to ask my opinion of the scene in the wood. It seemed as if he was so thoroughly convinced of a divine manifestation against him, that he despised any exceptional scepticism as utterly beneath his notice or attention—thoroughly engrossed, as he appeared to be, with the terrible sanction of a portent of some coming retribution. His silence in some degree distressed me, as I thought he resented my levity in commenting upon his convictions; so it was with some relief that Dr. Rogers came in and sat down at the table, apparently to wait for a call to the bedroom. A man this of ostentatious gloom,—too grave to deign to be witty, too sanctified to stoop to be cheerful, and therefore not the man I could have wished to see as the medical adviser, and perhaps the religious confidant, of my friend and his wife. A temperate man, too, by his own confession, pronounced over the top of a bottle; and he drank as if for health, while his manner of beslabbering the glass with his thick lips indicated a contempt for its confined capacity; a tumbler would have suited him better; and he waxed apparently graver when the delightful aroma of the Bordeaux grape fondled his nostrils. We got into supernaturals immediately, though how the subject was introduced I cannot remember; but Dr. Rogers was a grave and heavy advocate for divine manifestation, and Græme's ear, circumcised to delicacy, hung upon his thick lips. I asked for instances beyond the domain of the addled brains of old women, or the excited fancies of young; and Græme looked at me intently, without saying a word.

"I have seen hundreds die," said the doctor, "ay, strong men, the tissues of whose brain were, in comparison of those of your old women and young enthusiasts, as iron wires to pellicles of flesh. And how do they die if they are Christians, as all men ought to be? What is there in death, think you, to subvert the known laws of physiology? We might suppose, that as the spirit is about to leave the mortal frame, it will be fitful, and flit from tissue to tissue, and gleam and die away, to flare up again in some worldly image, perhaps, of the past; as where I have known it show the face of an early beloved one, long since gone, in all its first glory, to the eyes of a lover. Such are mere exceptions, from which no rule can be drawn; but they occur, and we admit them as consonant enough to natural causes. So far we all agree; but where is that consonance in all those numerous cases which have come under my own observation, where the man—a strong man even in death—is rapt into a vision set in a halo of light, and showing forth, as an assurance of divine favour, the very form and features of Him who died on the cross of Calvary? Is there anything in physiology to account for this? And then it occurs so often as almost to amount to a rule."

"I have too much respect for religion," replied I, "to throw a doubt on certain workings of the spirit in that mysterious condition when it hovers between the two worlds, and when it can hardly be said to belong to earth; but the case is entirely different where the common agencies are all working through their fitted and natural means. We can never say that any of those means are superseded—only others are substituted; and we do not understand the substitution."

"You are unfortunate," said the doctor, with a triumphant gravity. "If you admit that supernatural

agencies ever have—in any stage of the world, in any place, way, or manner, or by any means—had to do with earthly things, or have to do in those days, or will have to do in any future time or place on the earth's surface, your admission closes up your mouth for ever."

"To do, in those days, on this night, not many hours ago!" cried Græme, with rolling eyes. "Who cares for admissions of those who see, when one's own eyes are nearer the brain than are the eyes or lips of him who admits, or of him who denies?"

"Not hours ago!" said the doctor, fixing his big eyes on the face of Græme; "and so near a birth?"

"Oh, she knows nothing," said Græme.

"And I am supremely ignorant," said I.

"Of what?" inquired Rogers, turning his face again to Græme, as if he would take him into his mouth.

But just as he expected an answer, a slight rap sounded from the door. Rogers himself opened it, and found that the call was for him. Græme and I were left again together, but not to resume the former silence.

"I did not ask you," said he, "what you thought of the figure in the wood, for I expected nothing but a sceptical sneer. You have heard Rogers. He is a shrewd fellow, belonging to a profession not remarkable for credulity."

"Answer me this," said I: "Did no one know the duplicate card you used in the cheat?"

"You were present and Ruggieri, no others; did you know it?"

"No."

"Then do you know that Ruggieri is dead in Italy? and even if he had more penetration than you, the secret died with him. But, I tell you, he could not have known. Nothing transpired at the play to show

that a duplicate card was used at all, far less to show that it was a particular card."

"You may stagger me," said I, "but never can convince me that you are not having a nice game played off upon you, something similar to your own; only in place of duplicates, I fear there are triplicates. Why might not Gourlay have been aware of the fact you think only known to yourself?"

"And yet have shot himself as a ruined gambler?"

"Certainly it is more probable," said I, somewhat caught, "that he would have insisted upon your repaying him, under the threat of exposure. Yet one does not know what a man may do or not do, even if we knew the circumstances. Two doves will not pick up for their nests a straw each of the same shape. But I believe it is now settled, that no case of mystery has ever happened, or can be supposed by the most ingenious imagination, where the chances are more for supernatural agency than for human ingenuity or chance. The latter I put away out of your case, though the marvels of coincidence are stranger than fiction. Every one of us has a little record within his heart of such experiences. I have been startled by a coincidence into a five minutes' belief in supernatural agency. One opens a book of six hundred pages, and catches, on the instant, the passage for which he looked the whole day before. An actor dies in ranting 'there is another and a better world.' A soldier is saved from the punishment of death for sleeping on his post, by the fact of having been able to say that St. Paul's on a certain night struck thirteen, which it never did before. Andrew Gordon, the miser, drew a prize of twenty thousand pounds for the number 2001, which he dreamed of the night previous he bought the ticket. A shepherd was the discoverer of the Australian dig-

gings, by having taken up a piece of what he considered quartz to throw at his dog called Goldy. Human history is full of such things; but, marvellous as they are, they are not more so than the ways by which man manufactures mysteries, and gets them believed as the work of Heaven. As to that illuminated figure I saw in the wood"——

My speech was interrupted by a strange sound from the other end of the house. Græme started to his feet. It was not one of pain coming from a sick-room, but rather one of surprise, and there seemed a bustle among the servants. The door opened, and a woman's face, with two wild staring eyes, looked in. "Come here, sir," she cried, and disappeared upon the instant.

"Something more," ejaculated Græme, as he hurried away. I was allowed no time for an absurd monologue. Græme was not absent many minutes, when he hurried in as he had hurried out, but his face was not that which he took with him, braced up into surprise and fear, as that was. He was now as pale as death's pale horse, and nearly as furious. His eye beamed an unnatural light—his breathing was quick and snatchy, as if every inspiration and expiration pained the lungs. He seemed to wish some one to bind him with ropes, that he might escape the vibrations of his museles, and be steadied to be able to speak.

"Be calm," said I, taking him by the shoulders; "what new discovery is this? Nothing wrong with Mrs. Græme, I hope?"

"The child," he cried; but he could get no further.

"The child is"——

"Is what?" said I.

"Is marked on the back with the figure of the ten of diamonds."

"Pity it was not marked where it will wear its

pockets," said I; "but it will assuredly be a very fortunate child, nevertheless, and shall bear a load of diamonds on his back like the Arabian Alkansar."

"Are you mad?" he cried.

"Yes, with reason," I replied. "You know, nothing appears so outrageously insane to a madman, as that same God's gift called reason. They say, those who are bitten by the tarantula, and get dancing mad, think the wondering crowd about them raving maniacs. And there was the weeping philanthropist in the asylum of Montrose, in Scotland, who wept all day, and could not be consoled, because of all the people outside the asylum being mad.

"But," he gasped, "the thing is there."

"No doubt on't," said I, "and you ought to be grateful. I have read somewhere of one John Zopyrus, who went mad when he heard of a son being born to him; and here you are not mad, though you have a son (I hope) born to you, with ten diamonds besides."

"But the thing is there," he again cried.

"Ay, there's the rub, my dear fellow; the rub is there—let the rub *be* there; that is, go and rub, and the thing rubbed will not be there after the rubbing."

"Madness, man! It is a true mother's mark."

"Verily, a real *nævus maternus*," said I, "impressed by an avenging angel on the mother's brain, and transferred by nature's daguerreotype to the back of the child."

"You have said it."

"Nay, it is you who have said it," I continued; "and I will even suppose it is a mother's mark, to please you for a little, though it has no more that character than this sword-prick in my left cheek. But taking it in your own way, I have a theory I could propound to you about these marks. We say that the soul is in

the body. It is just as true that the body is in the soul. Every member of the entire physical person is represented in the brain, though we cannot discern the form in these white viscera. Now, see you, if a man loses his finger, his son will not be awanting in that member. But there are cases where the want of a member is hereditary. Why? Because the member was not represented in the cerebral microcosm of the first deficient person. From this small epitome in the brain, the child is an extended copy—*extended* from a mathematical point, where all the members and lineaments are *intended*. So, when the fancy of the mother is working in the brain—say, in realizing some external image—it will impress it in the cerebral person (woman) there epitomized; and if she is in a certain way, the image will go to a corresponding part of the fœtal point, which is the epitome of the child. A most ingenious, and satisfactory, and simple theory, which will explain the ten-of-diamond nævus, for”——

“Dreadful imbecility!” he exclaimed, as he threw himself on his chair; “most unaccountable and cruel trifling with a notable visitation of retributive justice, indicated by visible signs of terrible import to him who must bear the cross, and be reconciled to an angry Deity.”

“Against all that may tend to penitence for a past crime,” said I, getting grave, where gravity might avail for good, “I have nothing to say. But Heaven does not work through the mean of man’s deceit and stratagem, and the good that comes of fear goes with returning courage.”

Conscious of getting into a puling humour, I had no objection to an interruption by the entrance of Rogers, who, having finished his work, was probably intent upon the gratification which generally follows.

"I wish you joy of the boy and the diamonds," he said, as he seized Græme by the half-palsied hand. "The nurse is reconciled to the omen of a fortune; and surely never was omen more auspicious, for no sooner had the strange indication shown its mute vaticination than it disappeared, that there might be no deduction of beauty from the favourite of the gods." And drawing, with his lumbering hand, the tumbler near him, he filled it two-thirds up of pure wine, and presently his lips grappled with it like a camel at the bucket in the desert, with such effect that the contents changed vessels in a twinkling.

"Disappeared!" said I musingly.

"Yea, temperance hath her demands on occasions," said he, thinking I alluded to the exit of the wine, and not the ominous mark; "for there be two kinds of this noble virtue, the jejune and the hearty, whereof the former observes no plethoric gratifications, and the other is not averse to an extreme of cordial indulgence."

"Disappeared!" said I in a harping way, once again, "and left the skin discoloured."

"But it was there, and I saw it with these eyes," cried Græme, "and the doctor saw it, and Betha, but, thank God, not the mother."

"The vouchsafing of the eyes is an easy task," drawled Rogers. "The truth of present fact is of the moment of experience as regards the seer; but, as a moral entity, it never dies. The great Author of nature has his intention in these mysterious signs. We know only that there are two kinds of these God's finger-touches—the enduring and the evanescent. That we have now witnessed was of the latter kind, which we also call superficial in opposition to the other, which is painted on the *rete mucosum*, and never goes off. The difference of

indications we know not, further than that a mysterious purpose is served by both. But might I ask if ever there was any occasion on which the figure of this card might, as connected with some thrilling incident, have been impressed upon the imagination of the mother?"

"Never," cried Græme, as he shook violently.

"Then it betokens fortune to the heir of the Moated Grange," said Rogers.

"It betokens vengeance!" roared Græme, no longer able to contain himself; and he began to pace rapidly the room. Then stopping before me—

"How long will you torment me with your scepticism? Here, Betha," he cried to the woman, who at the instant again called Rogers, "what did you see on the back of the boy?"

"The ten of diamonds, sir," replied she, evidently frightened by the wild eyes of her master. "But you are not to be feared. Do I not know God's signs when I see them fresh from his very finger? I have seen them aforetime; and no man or woman on earth, no, even our minister, will convince me they are meant for nothing. This bairn will be a rich man, but it will not be by the devil's books; for he who made the mark does not tempt to evil by promises printed on the bodies of them he loves."

"I want not this drivelling," said her master, on whom her reading of the sign had an effect the very opposite of that intended. "You're a fool, but you have eyes. Say, once for all, you saw it, and will swear. Take her words, Rymer."

"As clear as I see the mark on your cheek, sir," she said, addressing me. "It was not from one who loved you so well as your mother did when she bore you, you got that mark."

"I got it from a villain called Ruggieri," I replied,

carrying nothing for the start I produced in Græme, but keeping my eye on the face of Rogers.

I will say nothing of what I observed on that long, sombre, saturnine index. It was an experiment on my part, and I might have found something, merely because I expected it; nor do I think Græme knew my object, though he felt the words as a surprise.

"And who is Ruggieri?" said the doctor, by way of putting a simple question.

"*Perhaps* an Italian," said I. "Rogers is, they say, the Scotch representative of that name."

"It is a lie, sir!" cried the grave son of Æsculapius; but finding he had committed a mistake, he beat up an apology close upon the heels of his insult. "I beg your pardon; I simply meant that the two names are different, and that you were out in your etymology."

"I am satisfied," I replied.

"And so am I," growled the doctor, as he shuffled out, followed by Betha.

"What the devil do you mean?" said the colonel, coming up, and looking me sternly in the face. "Is not this business serious enough for me and this house already, without the mention to that man, who knows nothing of me or of my history, of a name hateful to both you and me?"

"At present I have no intention of telling you what I meant by introducing that name in the presence of Rogers."

"More mystery!" said he.

"No mystery—all as plain as little Edith's card she got from Trott, or the blazon in the wood, or the mark on the child's back. But I do not wish to dwell longer on a subject which gives you so much pain. I am to be off in the morning, and I should wish, before I go, to know what is to be the issue of all this wonderful working."

Græme had now seated himself; and I resumed my chair also, to wait an answer, which his manner seemed to indicate might be slow and delicate. We looked, in the dim light of the room, at two in the morning, like two wizards trying our skill in working out some scheme of *diablerie*; yet, in reality, how unlike! For though we had both been gamblers, and consequently bad men, we had for years renounced the wild ways of an ill-regulated youth, and settled down to tread, with pleasure to ourselves and profit to others, the decent paths of virtue.

"I am resolved," said Græme at length——

"On what?" I inquired.

"On making amends. That money, which by means of the substituted card I took from Gourlay, sticks like a bone-splint in the red throat of my penitence. I cannot pray myself, nor join Annabel, nor listen to Edith, when they send up their supplications to that place where mercy is, and where, too, vengeance is—vengeance which, in the very form of my pictured crime, dogs me everywhere, as you have seen, though a philosophical pride prevents you from giving faith to what you have seen—vengeance which, though using no earthly instruments, is yet the stronger, and more terrible to me, for that very circumstance that it brings up my conscience, and parades its pictured whisperings before my vision, scorching my brain, and making me mad—vengeance, breaking no bones, nor lacerating flesh, nor spilling blood, yet going to the heart of the human organism, among the fine tissues where begin the rudiments of being, and whence issue the springs of feeling, sympathy, hope, love, and justice, all of which it poisons, and turns into agonies. Yes, sir, vengeance which, claiming the assistance of the fairest virtues, conjugal love and angelic purity, makes them smite

with shame, so that it were even a relief to me that the wife of my bosom were wicked, and the child of my affections a creature of sin. What are these signs that haunt me but instigators to redemption? and can I hesitate when Heaven asks obedience?"

"A useless harangue," said I, "when you have the means of saving yourself. Pay the money, read your Bible, and the signs will cease."

"You have said it. I will pay the money; but I do not know where the woman Gourlay lives."

"That is not a difficult matter. Where money is to be paid, the recipient will start out of the bosom of the earth. I am about sick of this chamber of mysteries—though no mysteries to me; and I go to bed. I doubt if you may expect to see me at the breakfast table in the morning."

"Will you leave me in this condition?" he said, with an imploring eye.

"You will hear from me. Good night."

In the midst of all these supernaturals, I remained myself pretty natural—got naturally among the comfortable bed-clothes, fell naturally asleep, and, in consequence of late hours, slept naturally longer than I intended. I started at seven, got my bag, and, without seeing Græme, set out for C—— town, got breakfast, and then took the stage for a seaport not very far distant. Having arrived at my destination, I sought out the Eastergate, a dirty street inhabited by poor people, mounted three pair of stairs till I saw through a slate-pane, knocked at a door, and was met by a woman, with an umbrageously bearded face peering out from the side of her head-gear—that is, there was a head there in addition to her own.

"The devil!" said the man. "How did you find me out?"

"By the trail of evil," I said, as I walked in, and shut the door behind me.

"Did you not know I was dead?" he continued, by way of desperate raillery.

"Yes, the devil was once reported to be dead and buried in a certain long town, but it was only a feint, whereby to catch the unwary Whigs. Let us have seats. I want a little quiet conversation with you both."

We seemed rather a comfortable party round the fire.

"Ruggieri," said I, "do you know that scar?"

"I have certainly seen it before," replied he, with the utmost composure.

"Well, you know the attack you made upon me at Brussels, for the convenient purpose of getting buried along with your victim a certain little piece of dirty paper I have in my pocket, whereby you became bound to pay to me a thousand florins which I lent you, on the faith of one I took for a gentleman."

"The scar I deny," he replied, unblushingly; "and as for the bit of paper, if you can find any one in these parts who can prove that the signature thereto was written by this hand belonging to this person now sitting before you, you will accomplish something more wonderful than finding me out here." And he laughed in his old boisterous way.

"The more difficult, I daresay," replied I, as I fixed a pretty inquisitive gaze on him, "that you have a duplicate to your real name of Charles Rogers."

"'Tis a lie!" he exclaimed. "My father was—was—yes—an artist in Bologna—the cleverest magician in Italy."

"And that is the reason," said I calmly, "that your brother the doctor works his tricks so cleverly at the Moated Grange."

Subtle officers accomplish much by attacks of surprise—going home with a fact known to the criminal to be true, but supposed by him to be unknown to all the world besides. I had acted on this principle, and the effect was singular. His tongue, which had laid in a stock of nervous fluid for roaring like a steam-boiler a little opened, was palsied. He turned on me a blank look; then, directing his eye to the woman, “You infernal hag,” he exclaimed, “all this comes from you!”

“I deny it,” said the woman, as she left his side and came round to mine. “But I now know, what I always suspected, that you are a villain. Sir,” she continued, “this man, and his brother Dr. Rogers, prevailed upon me to give them a paper, to enable them to get out of Colonel Græme the money he won from my husband. I believe they have got it, and that they are keeping it from me.”

“They have not got it,” said I, “and never will. The money is yours, and will be paid to you, if to any.”

“Thank God!” she exclaimed. “No good could come out of the designs of this man and his brother. They made it up to terrify the colonel”——

A look from the man stopped her; but the broken sentence was to me a volume. They sat and looked lightnings at each other; and I contented myself with thinking, that when a rotten tree splits, bears catch honey.

“Oh, I’m not to be frightened,” she continued, as she gathered up courage to dare the villain. “I will tell all about the ten of diamonds which I heard made up between them.”

“You most haggard of all haggard hags!” cried the man, as his fury rose, “do you know, that while I could have got you this money, I can cut you out of it? Was it the loss of the money, think ye, that made

the wretched coward, your husband, shoot himself? No, it was conscience. They were a pair of villains. I know that Gourlay had a secreted card, whereby he was to blackleg Græme, and that it was disappointment, shame, and conscience, working all together, that made him draw the trigger to end a villanous life. But the game is up," he continued, as he rose and got hold of his hat; then standing erect and fearless, he held out his finger, pointing to me—"Rymer!" he said impressively, but with devilish calmness, "let your ears tingle as you think of me; it will keep you in remembrance of a friend, who, when next he meets you, will embrace you *cordially*—about the heart, you know. Good night!"

"And well gone," said the woman, as she heard the door slammed with a noise that shook the crazy tenement. "Oh! I am so happy you have come to relieve me of an engagement which I was ashamed of, and which would have yielded me nothing; for their object was to force money out of your friend, and then divide it between them."

"How did Rogers or Ruggieri find you out?" inquired I.

"I cannot tell; the nose of a bloodhound has a finer sense than a sheep-dog's."

"And how did you come to know of the compact between the brothers?"

"They got unwary under wine drunk at that fir table. The doctor was the medical attendant of Colonel Græme, and this gave him means of working upon his conscience; and I know they have been at this work for a time."

"But how did Ruggieri come to know about the ten of diamonds?"

"Oh, the card was found crumpled up under the

table by Ruggieri himself, who, with you, was present at the play. He has the card at this moment. I have seen it. But this is the first time I ever heard of Gourlay's intention to cheat. I will never believe that; but then I am his widow, and may be too favourable to him, while Ruggieri was his enemy, and may be too vindictive."

"And how was the colonel to be applied to, after his conscience was wrought up to pay?"

"The doctor was to open the subject, and undertake to negotiate with me, to whom he was to hand over the money—one penny of which I never would have received."

"The matter is now in better hands," said I. "Will you be staunch and firm in detailing all you know of the scheme?"

"Yes, though I should not receive a farthing."

"And you will be willing to go to the Moated Grange, and, if necessary, swear to those things?"

"I will; and, sir, serious though the whole affair has been to me—for I am poor, and have children—I sometimes wondered, if I did not laugh, at the queer, far-brought, devilish designs of the doctor. Oh, he is a very dragon that for cunning! I heard him say he would impress a painted piece of paper on the child's back, so as to leave a mark, and swear it was a mother's mark, graven by the hands of the Almighty. Oh the blasphemy and wickedness of man!"

"Go, dress yourself," said I, "and come with me to the Grange."

"I will, if you can give me some minutes to get a neighbour to take charge of George and Anne." And away she went to get this family arrangement completed, while I sat panting with desire to free my friend from the agony of his condition.

It was about seven o'clock of that same evening that Mrs. Gourlay and I reached the Moated Grange. I got her shown into an ante-room, to wait the issue of my interview with Græme. It happened that the doctor and he were together, and it even seemed as if they were converging towards a medium state of confidence. I could observe from the looks of the victim that he had been so far at least drawn into a recital of facts (the nature of which it was not difficult for me to conjecture), for I heard the word Gourlay fall from his lips, as the last of a sentence which my entry had cut short. Indeed, I may as well state here that Græme afterwards admitted to me that when I entered he was in the midst of a confession of the whole secret of the false play, to which confession he had been first driven by his internal monitor; and secondly, led or rather pulled on by the arch-ambidexter, whose game it was to cheat the cheater, and get the money from him upon some pretence of seeking out Mrs. Gourlay and paying the money to her. I was, in short, in the very nick of time, and could hardly help smiling at the strange part I was playing in what was, as I thought, one of those serious melodramatic farces of which (in the Frenchman's sense) this strange world of laughter and groans is made up.

"Dr. Rogers," said I, after the customary greetings, "it is well I have found you. I picked up a poor woman by the way who lay under the seizure of premature labour, and knowing the generosity of my friend, I brought her here for succour and relief. She is in the green parlour, and, I fear, in exigency. Come."

"May I see her?" said Græme.

"Certainly, for a moment," said Rogers. "Ah! I rejoice at these opportunities of employing the benefi-

cence of our profession. Who knows but I may bring into the world one who will change the aspect of a hemisphere, and work out some great blessings to the human race !”

And following me, they arrived at the door of the green parlour. I opened it. Rogers walked forward, Græme followed, and I stood in the midst of the three.

“ Dr. Rogers—Mrs. Gourlay, an intimate friend of your brother, Signor Ruggieri.”

“ Colonel Græme—Mrs. Gourlay, the widow of that unfortunate man, Ebenezer Gourlay.”

To which Mrs. Gourlay responded by a curtsy, deep and respectful.

“ I am master for the nonce. The door is locked, and Mrs. Gourlay must be delivered of her child with the nævus of the ten of diamonds on its back.”

And she was delivered, but not with the assistance of the doctor. She performed her part well. By a little drawing out, on my part, I got her to tell her story ; how she had got acquainted with the two brothers ; how they had laid their plans ; how she came to know of the crumpled card, and the use they were to make of it ; the trick of the impression on the child’s back ; the forcing of the money from the colonel on the pretence of paying it to her, with her conviction that she would never handle a penny of it.

During the period of this extraordinary recital, it was my part to watch the countenances of the two listeners. Græme sat as if bound to his chair ; every word of the woman seemed to work as a charm upon him, relieving him of the conviction he had been impressed with, that he was specially under the judgment of Heaven, without depriving him of the consolation of a late penitence. Sometimes I caught his eye, and, I fairly admit, I was wicked enough to indulge in a little

mute risibility to give him confidence in the conclusions he was fast drawing from the somewhat garrulous narrative of the poor widow.

As for the doctor, he held out like a Milo. From the first moment he saw the woman he knew that the game was up with him, but he knew also, what all hardened sinners know, that they owe it to the caco-daimon they obey, to deny everything to the last, as if they were afraid to show any indication of what they consider the weakness of being good. We allowed him to get quit upon the condition of silence on his part, for a prudent forbearance on ours.

Mrs. Gourlay remained at the Grange for some time, whereby we had an opportunity of further ascertaining all the details of the machination. A sum of money was given to her, and Græme's conscience was relieved, as well by this retribution as by a conviction to which we both came, that the game between him and Gourlay was rendered at least equal by the fact which we had both reason to believe, as stated by Ruggieri, that Gourlay himself intended to cheat, and that his death could be more easily accounted for on that theory than on any other.

So far as peace could be brought to one truly penitent, that peace was brought; and many a time since I have admired, in the happiness of the family at the Grange, that exemplification of the promise of our blessed faith, that there is no degree of guilt which may not be atoned for by the heart that is contrite, and trusts to the mercy of Heaven through the eternally-ordained source.

I may gratify a whim by informing the readers of the Border Tales that the secret of the mark on the child's back was never communicated to Mrs. Græme. The nurse had told her of the fact of the strange pheno-

menon, and she always clung to the belief that it was an omen of good fortune to the boy. But under what mysterious conditions is the chain of cause and effect kept up! The frequent allusion made by the mother to the fact of the mark, drew her son's attention to the cards. He early became fond of playing with them, as boys do. The early feeling germinated, and became a kind of passion, and I have reason to believe he became a gambler like his father, squandering away a great part of his patrimony.

END OF VOL. XXII.







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